



# JEEVADHARA

## **CHURCH OF THE POOR**

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**Edited by**

**Kuncheria Pathil**

PROCESSED

NOV 11 2009

GTU LIBRARY

Vol. XXXIX 2009

ISSN 0970 - 1125

No. 232

# JEEVADHARA

is published every month  
alternately in English and Malayalam

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A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

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## **Church of the Poor**

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## Editorial

The Church at its origins was a community of the poor, sick, oppressed and the marginalized. It was to them that Jesus announced the Good News of arrival of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' Mission Statement at the synagogue of Nazareth, where he read out from Isaiah 61: 1- 2, clearly indicates it: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and sight to the blind; to free the oppressed and to announce the Lord's year of mercy" (Lk 4: 18-19). This Jesus' Movement and the little flock of Jesus gradually became an 'Imperial Christianity' with the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine and the subsequent identification of the Church and the State. The leaders of the Church, who were shepherds of the flock, became a 'princely class' over against the ordinary members (laity) of the Church. On the basis of God's irrevocable covenant with the poor and irreconcilable antinomy between God and mammon, the Church has to recapture its original vision as a 'Community of the Poor'.

In the first article of this number, Jose Kuriedath briefly introduces the phenomenon of Globalization and Market economy and presents their positive and negative impacts and shows how it has really affected the poor. What is needed today is a healthy combination and cross-fertilization of the so-called capitalism and socialism and the emergence of a new social economy balancing the freedom of the individual and the well-being of the society. The second article by Paul Kalluveettil highlights the Old Testament concept of '*anāwîm*'. '*Anāwîm*' does not mean merely a group of people with spiritual poverty or humility. In the exilic and post-exilic periods the external and internal oppression and exploitation crushed the majority of the Israelites and made their life very miserable. Naturally they cried out

to Yahweh, the champion of the poor. Through Second Isaiah the Lord promises his '*anāwîm*' liberation and salvation. The '*anāwîm*' are called the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the prisoners, those who mourn and grieve. They put their trust on the Day of the Lord when the Messiah would come to free them from every kind of bondage, both political, economic, social, physical, cultural and religious. In the third article George Edayadiyil discusses the theme: 'Jesus and the Poor'. Jesus came as one among the poor and he had no home of his own; he lived with the poor and the marginalized. Jesus' community was a community of the poor, exploited and the marginalized. The Church today must stand on the side of the poor and it should unambiguously declare its commitment and option for the poor. The fourth article by Saviour Menachery introduces Paul's concern for the poor and his "Collection for the Poor". He analyzes the different terms connected with the "Collection for the Poor" and makes it undoubtedly clear that the collection for the poor was not optional, but integral to *apostolic preaching*. Pauline action still remains a perfect paradigm for preaching the gospel and it even serves as an effective panacea for the problems of the poorest of the world in the context of global recession and unjust distribution of wealth. In the last article Joseph Patmury calls on the Churches to recapture their original commitment to the poor and eliminate imposed poverty from the face of the world as it dehumanizes millions of people today.

The poor people are very close to God because their life is totally dependent on God. They believe in God and trust in God that God will take care of them. God loves them and provides them as he takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. According to Jesus' teaching, God and mammon cannot go together. Wealth accumulated for oneself without sharing it with the needy and the poor becomes mammon. The Church's wealth is meant for sharing with the poor and the needy, but if it is accumulated for itself, it becomes mammon.

Associate General Editor  
Thiruvananthapuram

**Kuncheria Pathil**

# **Globalization, Market Economy and Increasing Poverty**

**Jose Kuriedath**

The economic crisis and the collapse of the markets today calls us to reflect critically on what is globalization and market economy, and examine whether it helps to remove poverty as claimed or to increase it. The author briefly introduces the phenomenon of Globalization and Market economy and presents their positive and negative impacts. By Globalization and Free Market Economy the boundaries of the Nations are broken through and free economic transactions between individuals and societies are taking place. While the unrestricted availability of technology is a plus point of globalization, as everyone knows, globalization promotes basically an economy that is consumerist, which in the long run affects ecology negatively. The author thinks that from the ashes of free capitalism will possibly emerge a social market economy, a mixture of capitalism and socialism in which both will try to repair the negative effects of each other. According to the author, what is the benefit if the whole society cannot develop and only a few individuals become rich? From a Christian point of view, it is the community that should be transformed into the 'Kingdom of God', not merely individuals. What is needed is a new economy by mixing the modern dynamics of the economy with the wisdom of the millennia. Dr. Jose Kuriedath CMI is a social scientist, thinker and educationist. At present he is the head of the CMI Department of Education and resides at the CMI Generalate, Kakkanad, Kochi.

A couple of weeks back, this author was passing by a petty grocery shop in the neighbourhood. The shop looked rather deserted even though it was evening, the usual time of quite heavy business. The shopkeeper told me that the business was very dull and his profit had

heavily gone down. The chief reason for the sudden change was the departure of hundreds of construction workers who were camping in the area for the building of several multi-storied apartments that were fast coming up there. About a dozen apartment buildings, where brisk construction work was going on, now looked rather deserted with very few employees on the spot. The real estate developers who had been raising money through the pre-sale of apartments found their wallets thin, when the prospective buyers hesitated to shell out their money. People seem to have lost confidence in the market, at least for the time being.

Right now, the whole world is going through an economic depression. Business is dull, few new investments are made and thousands of jobs are being lost everyday. The origin of this depression is said to be the huge failure of a few financial institutions in the United States of America. It is said that the huge credit advanced by some of the banks in USA defaulted and those banks lost their credit-worthiness. Other financial institutions which had invested in these huge banks could not draw their own money from them, and naturally those who invested in the latter set of financial institutions could not get their money back for investments. This led to a chain reaction in many parts of the world and destroyed the confidence of investors. When investments came to a standstill, many allied jobs were lost and the problem began to affect the ordinary people. The people who lost jobs or whose income decreased did not dare to spend money in the market, and at the end of the long chain, the problem in USA began to affect even the ordinary shopkeeper in the neighbourhood. Someone who carefully watched the flow of buyers in the busy evenings at a posh textile shop in Kochi observed that the number of people who now visit the shop has gone down to almost a third of the past. What are the real reasons for this economic crisis? Is it due to the malpractices of a few bankers on the other side of the globe? The change in the markets all over the world is an occasion to reflect on what is globalization and market economy, before examining whether it helps to remove poverty as claimed or increase it all over the world.

## Meaning of Globalization

'Globalization' is rather a new phenomenon that has spread in various areas of life, chiefly under the influence of the western countries. It is the disappearance or weakening of the national boundaries and the consideration of the whole world or most parts of it as one single area of human interactions without any hindrances. Globalization is taking place today in information technology, communication, social contacts and, above all, in economic relationships. In the last mentioned area, it denotes the disappearance of checks and controls by nation states on economic transactions of individuals and organizations. The trend also causes political and cultural globalization. Hence, globalization has several dimensions:

**a) Philosophical:** Philosophically globalization is founded on the theory that individual freedom is supreme. It entails a vision that gives virtually unlimited scope to individual freedom in relationships and transactions. It is the celebration of human freedom from social restrictions. Since individual freedom is conceived to be unrestricted, the philosophy of globalization does not see anything wrong in encouraging the domination of the powerful over the powerless. This domination may be in the economic, technological, cultural or communication sphere. The society and its needs are conceived to be secondary and it is expected that they should not control the individual freedom, except for what is most necessary. Such a liberal philosophy is grounded on the Greek concept of the individual; no religion conceives the individual with so much freedom. All the world religions, particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam, give primary importance to the growth and welfare of the community.

**b) Ideological:** With the disintegration of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, a neo-liberal ideology has spread all over the globe. Liberal ideology emphasises the dynamics of the market economy. It supports a kind of laissez-faire capitalism or "savage capitalism" or "economic Darwinism". It visualizes economic growth as an end in itself. In economic growth, only macro-economy is taken into consideration; economic condition of sub-groups is often forgotten. Liberalism as an ideology assumes a quasi-religious character;

anything different is considered wrong. Greed becomes a virtue, competition a commandment, profit a sign of salvation. Dissenters are dismissed as non-believers at best, and heretics at worst.

**c) Commercial:** Liberalised version of free trade and unrestricted investment are encouraged as solution to problems of underdevelopment. In this competition, indigenous enterprises may or will die out, but that is always ignored. Since economic transactions form a very substantial part of globalized transactions, the license to enter into such transactions and make profit without restrictions is an implied interest in the process. Profit making without borders is encouraged.

**d) Technological:** With the unprecedented revolution in science and technologies, particularly the revolutionary spread of communication through cybernetics and electronic media, the globe is bound together by a complex network of technological devices for transfer of information and materials: computers, fiber electronics, satellites, cellular phones, faxes, emails etc. Besides, it also aims at exporting and importing all technologies to any part of the world so that they may be used by all without restrictions. Hence, the goal is accessibility to these facilities by all. There is an objective of levelling off in the distribution of such knowledge.

**e) Cultural:** Cultural invasion from the West is another dimension of globalization: MTV, McDonald, fast food culture, videos. Western culture is regarded as the only culture with value. Its roots can be traced to the cultural condition of the feudal west in which the whole united Roman empire was considered to be under one power known as Christendom. Later, the enlightenment which started the age of reason and the domination of nature through industry also helped the West to gain hegemony over others.

**f) Political:** Instead of the bipolar world of the cold war era, in the globalized world, there is only a uni-polar world; and the pole is situated in the capitalist West. All nation states lose their power before this single pole. The experiment with nation states, which have been a comparatively recent phenomenon in the human becomes less important in the globalized situation.

## Effects of Globalization

Globalization as a process has several effects in different areas of life. The unrestricted availability of technology is a plus point of globalization; the fruits of development become available not only to the rich but to all societies. But, as technologies are transferred without border restrictions, the arrival of new technologies and their high efficiency destroy the traditional technologies and those who use the latter are thrown out of the system. Though the products gain quality, a section of the manufacturing and distributing population are thrown out of the system as unemployed and unemployable.

Less control on individual freedom than what existed in most socialist countries is also something beneficial. However, in a globalized market, the more powerful become capable of reaching out to any corner of the world and control the market. Hence their power increases often at the expense of the vulnerable sections of the society. In a globalized economy, the capital flows to where it can make more profit, i.e. to the poor countries; but labour does not flow in the opposite direction. Since globalization does not provide any sort of reservation or affirmative action for the less powerful, but treats all in the same manner, it becomes the treatment of 'unequals' equally, and enhances structural inequality. The rich reach new heights of comfort while the poor are denied such facilities. Hence the gap among them grows wider.

Since the states become less powerful to control the economic organizations, they cannot build a safety net for the poor in the society. Since market dynamics are allowed to function, state intervention to control prices, subsidise the expenses etc. disappear. As the authority of the states gradually diminishes, the associations like the G-7 becomes a global parallel state.

Globalization encourages the possibility of revival of fundamentalism also. Globalization causes the mixing of cultural identities in which the weak cultural elements can be dissolved by the interference of the stronger ones. This causes anxiety and inferiority feeling among the affected and they attempt to revive their cultural identity with a fundamentalist emphasis. In some cases, this may turn out to be even

violent, causing religious or cultural terrorism. Cultural imperialism that accompanies globalization can also cause cultural amnesia in the minds of the less powerful countries. They begin to forget their cultural identity and even their roots and begin to identify themselves with the foreign culture. The best example for this is the trend among the Malayalees to forget Malayalam and ape the English.

Finally, as everyone knows, globalization promotes basically an economy that is consumerist, which in the long run affects ecology negatively.

### Rise of Economic Globalization

In the post-communist period, under the leadership of the United States, the only global leader left, the world seemed to grow in capitalist market economy. The multinational companies began to cross the state borders and move all over the world pitching tents for their business. And business also seemed to grow. *Time* gives an example in its issue dated February 2, 2009: “Hoang Van Ti was one of the winners when Vietnam ended its long period of isolation and joined the global economy. Foreign investors flocked to the communist country, new factories making computers, clothing and other goods for export rose from the country’s rice paddies, and suddenly jobs were no longer in short supply. In 2007, Ti landed work near Hanoi at a South Korea-owned kitchenware manufacturer, where he attached handles to pots on an assembly line. The pay, at \$105 a month, was much more than the 22-year old could ever earn back in his farming village of Hau Loc in central Vietnam” (p.46). This was not typical of Vietnam alone, but of most developing countries, into which business began to flow because of the cheap labour.

A number of factors helped the growth of this phenomenon, i.e. the globalization of economy. First, the world seemed to believe, in the post-communist period, that the only alternative for economic growth is market economy based on capitalist principles. When that way of thinking began to spread all over the world, the governments were compelled to open their borders for multinational companies. So, secondly, the developing countries which were starving of precious capital and thirsting for investment from rich countries and generation

of jobs for their unemployed or underemployed millions unrolled red carpets to the companies from the West. Numerous types of consumer goods began to be manufactured in the assembling plants of the developing countries. The generation of more industrial jobs fetched more money for the people and the governments basked in the shine of the growing economy.

### **Spread of Market Economy**

In the beginning of the industrial revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a kind of free capitalism, called laissez-faire capitalism, that came into existence. The capitalist or the investor had almost unbridled freedom to hire and fire, decide on the terms and conditions of work and the amount of profit he could collect. Experiencing the harshness of such a heartless capitalism, the states and the society at large gradually tried to put controls on the freedom of the capitalists. Several welfare measures were introduced into the system in order to protect the basic rights of the workers and the consumers. Thus most countries had capitalist enterprises regulated by the state. But, in the post-communist period, in their enthusiasm for the fast growth of the economy and the belief that capitalist system alone is the answer to poverty, these states themselves removed some of the important regulations. The U.S. was the least regulated capitalist country in the world, but it removed much of what little regulation existed in its system. Even countries like India which had been protecting the interests of the state and the marginalized sections of the society through several regulatory measures, began to remove them. For example, the removal of the restriction on foreign share to be kept below fifty per cent, the scrapping of the preference given to the production of capitalist goods rather than consumer goods, generous tax exemptions for exports, the introduction of special economic zones for the purpose etc.

### **Increasing Poverty**

It was widely claimed for a long time that the globalized market economy had been helping in “lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty”. It might be true that more people got jobs in the factories that sprang all over the world; and it might also be true that

those who were lucky to get jobs increased their purchasing power. But the market economy, particularly its globalized brand, mostly concentrated on the production and distribution of consumer goods in the developing countries. As these consumer goods began to flood the market, those who acquired higher purchasing power began to enjoy its benefit. But what about those who were outside the net? They continued to remain with the old purchasing power, particularly those who were still employed in the agriculture sector. These people with the same old income were unable to enjoy any of the newly available consumer goods that flooded the markets. While the sections of the rich and the rising middle class could enjoy the new consumer goods and enhance the quality of their life, the traditional farmers with a stagnant income could not improve their lifestyle. This widened the gap between the rich and the poor. As more money in the form of income from new jobs came into the hands of more people, the prices went up with regard to most of the goods. Besides, the goods manufactured in the newly established production units were qualitatively better too. Those who were left outside the market economic growth could just gape at the flooding market; they could not buy even the goods they used to previously due to the increased prices. In other words, market economy even in its good times only increased the poverty of some sections of the people.

One might imagine that those who were denied the fruits of the globalization were only a small section of the society; it is absolutely not true. In all developing countries, it was agriculture which employed the vast majority of the population. For example, almost 75% of the population in India still depend on agriculture for their employment and income. This is the situation in most developing countries. Only a small percentage from this vast majority was lucky to enter into the market economy and enjoy its fruits. So, those who were left out of the growing market economy were not a small number, as it is often made out by the spokespersons of globalization. In other words, globalization gave shine to the economy of the developing countries only in cities where a minority lives; the plight of the others grew worse, as explained above.

In the early 2008, much before the economic slump, prices for staple food like rice and corn skyrocketed with rising global demand. Higher prices strained the rural economy, and meagre incomes and malnourishment increased. Even those whose lives have been improving were not gaining ground as quickly as they might have in the past. Around the world, wage increases lagged overall economic growth rates. In a November study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) figured that in Asia, for every percentage-point increase in per capita GDP growth between 2001 and 2007, average wages increased by less than two-thirds of a point. It means that though the wages increased, prices increased more in proportion so much so that the purchasing power of the workers decreased in real terms. In this change, the low skilled workers were hit more deeply than the skilled, because the wage-increase of the unskilled workers was still lower.

In other words, the rich have been getting richer faster than the poor. In India, for example, the degree of income inequality in urban centres rose 15% in the decade prior to 2005, according to a study by the New Delhi-based National Council of Applied Economic Research. "Growth is captured by high income groups; it is not trickling down", says Shiladitya Chatterjee, the head of the poverty unit at the Asian Development Bank in Manila.

Why the poor seem to be missing out on the spoils of globalization is a matter of debate among economists. Part of the reason is the greater use of technology in manufacturing. With factories even in low-wage countries like India and China shifting to higher-tech production methods and products, demand is rising for well-trained engineers and managers – positions out of the reach of unskilled labourers. Moreover, as more nations try to advance, ever more hungry mouths are chasing foreign investment and export sales. There is not enough to go around and wages grow very slowly as a result. In a fierce competition of countries, those with the lowest wage structure survive, while others are pushed out. Besides, the governments which became overly dependent on export-led growth, ignored the needs of those not engaged in industries connected to world trade and investment. That has been true with regard to the agriculture sector.

Remember the plight of the farmers in India and the number of suicides that occurred in different parts of the country. In most of the Asian countries that joined the bandwagon of globalization, programmes for rural development, including land reform, and investment in crucial infrastructure for farmers were forgotten. Many developing countries went for industrialization while importing food rather than investing in agriculture; and it had devastating consequences. As Ajay Chhibber, the director of the Asia bureau at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in New York says, “creating urban, industrial jobs clearly can’t be the answer when you have great masses of people existing in the rural areas”.

Coming back to India again, while the poverty rate seems to have decreased in India during the period of liberalization, the absolute number of desperately poor Indians increased from 436 million in 1990 to 456 million in 2005, that is, 42% of the population. This is due to the neglect of the condition of farmers in rural areas; economic growth in this country is not sustainable without improving food production. Exports and foreign investment have brought benefits mainly to a small number of city dwellers, while the new wealth has not been used to build roads, irrigation systems and schools for the hinterlands. If one travels to the countryside of North India, one can very well see this fact. While the cities are booming, the villages remain as they had been decades ago. Much of India remains almost completely untouched by the years of near double-digit growth. Probably Kerala alone exhibits a different picture with significant improvement in countryside. That is not due to the boom in agriculture or rural activities, but because the money from migrant workers are being invested even in rural areas in this part of the country. A mentality that is focussed on cities and industries for exports has led the officials to ignore potential sources of growth in their own backyards.

### **Fall of Market Economy**

To continue with the story of Hoang Van Ti mentioned above, “two months ago, the world’s severe economic slowdown hit home.

Orders at Ti's factory died up; his manager furloughed him indefinitely. Ti can no longer help his family in Hau Loc by sending them extra cash. As he chain-smokes at a makeshift tea stall near Hanoi, he longs to get back on the road to prosperity" (*Time*, p. 46). As the economic slump deepens, stories like Ti's are playing out with dismal regularity all over the world. "The nations that bought into the promises of globalization benefited mightily as increased investment and trade generated new jobs, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. But the crash of consumer spending in the West is idling the manufacturing engines that drove much of the developing world's economic growth" (*Ibid.* p. 47).

Not only the manufacturing engines are idling, but large numbers of the population are being plunged into destitution. In China, the modernizing society that has provided a blueprint for economic growth for so many other countries, exports are plunging, tens of thousands of factories are closing and tens of millions of newly unemployed workers are migrating from coastal cities back to their impoverished home villages. Globalization that claimed to alleviate the poverty of millions, looks like losing its ability to transform lives for the better. As, Chibber said, "the export-led growth model in a medium and long-term sense is coming under stress, and it will be much harder to maintain progress on poverty reduction".

The impact of the slump in the market economy is most felt in East and Southeast Asia in the developing world. It is in the countries in these regions that the economy was liberalized and opened to market economy in the 1960s, while most countries in these regions including India opted for a mixed economy of state capitalism and limited free entrepreneurship. Industrial enterprises, foreign as well as local, multiplied, tapping low-wage labour to become internationally competitive exporters that shipped varieties of consumer goods to developed countries. Farmers like Ti above found new jobs on assembly lines and their income soared. In 1981, nearly 80% of the East Asians lived on less than \$1.25 a day, according to a recent World Bank study; but by 2005, on \$ 18. In contrast, those countries, e.g., countries in Africa, which did not connect to the world economy as successfully as in East Asia, the poverty rate remained stuck at

around 50% during the above noted period. India itself joined the party after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, then Finance Minister, introduced reforms beginning in 1991 that dismantled stifling network of state controls and licenses known as the 'license Raj'.

Today, the midst of the financial meltdown, it is those very nations that have gained most from the global economy that are suffering the most. Jing Ulrich, chairman of China equities at JP Morgan in Hong Kong, estimates that 60,000 enterprises shut in China's Guangdong province alone in 2008, as export orders and credit dried up (*Time*, p. 47). According to the Chinese government, about ten million migrant workers have lost their jobs. In January this year, the Federation of Indian Export Organizations warned that ten million Indian workers might lose their jobs in the coming months. Some 300 million people in Asia alone are so close to the poverty line that the economic downturn could push them back below it. Even those parts of the world not as exposed as the above are also at risk. UNDP's Chibber says, "At a minimum, the progress on poverty could be stalled, but it could even be reversed".

In the developing countries that have been connected to the export-oriented global market, the present recession is creating a very serious crisis. The consumers in the US and Europe scale back in times of recession and the export from the developing countries are naturally affected. To offset this loss, the developing countries can't count on domestic demand because these societies have not developed a style of generous consumption. That is why the Chinese leadership is now trying to stimulate such a consumption style and bring back a balance in its economy.

### **Need for Social Market Economy**

When competition for export-oriented investment intensifies, the developing countries must not be satisfied with providing unskilled jobs and easy and fast growth. They have to develop better education in order that they can create skilled workers. It also should boost rural economy by helping agriculture and rural infrastructures such as roads, communication network etc. so that local consumption supports the boost in production.

Besides, the total dependence of the economy on capitalist mode of production can also create problems. That is why many people today turn again to think of the advantages of a controlled economy. Reinhard Marx, the former Roman Catholic Bishop of Trier who is now Archbishop of Munich and Freising, wrote a book called *Das Kapital* borrowing the title of the real Karl Marx. He wonders whether Marx's critique of capitalism was after all right. Even though capitalism lasted longer than any one expected back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the new Marx fears that the system might collapse one day as a result of its internal contradictions. The Archbishop is not alone in such fear. The task of warding off financial collapse and economic depression is now the overwhelming priority for government leaders, central bankers and regulators everywhere. All agree that the current situation is perplexing. Markets have failed and they have destroyed the conventional wisdom about how to run an efficient economy. As the former British Prime Minister said, "ask the experts what to do and the most honest reply is 'I don't know'".

Karl Marx's utopian predictions about revolution and the triumph of socialism might have been wrong; many of the policies carried out in his name in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought misery to millions in countries ranging from Russia to China. But if one leaves aside the prophetic, prescriptive parts of Marx's writings, there is a trenchant diagnosis of the underlying problems of a market economy that is surprisingly relevant even today. He was moved by the glaring inequalities between the rich and poor that are more topical than ever today. He thought that work should bring personal fulfilment and that labour should not be treated as a simple commodity, foreshadowing today's controversies over outsourcing and poor working condition in developing countries. He wondered whether the middle class would be squeezed out of existence. He also noted how profits were taking an ever bigger share of the economy at the expense of the wages, just as they are once again today. So, there is a need for a new road map for capitalism today. If governments "are not in a position to show that we can create a social order for the world in which such crises do not take place, then we will face stronger questions as to

whether this really is the right economic system”, says German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

There is a lot about today’s mess that Marx could not have predicted – credit defaults, sub-prime mortgages, sky-high salaries of top executives etc. The capitalism of today is far removed from the cruder version that Marx analyzed, before the advent of pension and unemployment systems, medical insurance and health and safety legislation. Nonetheless, the Archbishop says in his new *Das Kapital*: “There is a question that won’t leave me in peace: at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the capitalist West defeated the communist East in the battle between systems, were we too quick to dismiss you (Karl Marx) and your economic theories?”.

Uncontrolled capitalism has been its own enemy. Even in countries like Germany where ‘social market economy’ has been functioning for many years, its social-solidarity system has been badly strained over the past few years, as budget cuts were implemented and American-style practices came into vogue, including a focus on short-term profits over longer-term prosperity, broad deregulation and fast and loose finance. Some auto industries, in the height of the boom, even threatened to move jobs abroad unless workers made big concessions on pay and working hours. The French President Nicolas Sarkozy severely criticized such attitudes and attacked outsized corporate pay packages and ‘golden parachutes’ for fired executives. According to a study by the International Institute for Labour Studies, the CEOs of the 15 largest companies in Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, South Africa and the U.S. earn between 71 times and 183 times as much as the average employee in those nations. But today, after the fall, uncontrolled capitalism has lost its reason to exist. And that is going to be the lasting solution for the economy. Thus from the ashes of free capitalism will possibly emerge a social market economy, a mixture of capitalism and socialism in which both will try to repair the negative effects of each other. According to several economic experts, this social market economy can’t be imposed by law; it should grow naturally out of a cultural disposition. As Sarkozy said, there should develop a “moralization” of capitalism,

viz. greater sense of social and personal responsibility on the part of the business, reining in of financial speculation and a renewed emphasis on entrepreneurship and work. "I believe in the creative force of capitalism, but I am convinced that capitalism cannot survive without an ethic, without respect for a number of spiritual values, without humanism, without respect for people", the French President said two years ago in a speech that articulated a critique of the globalized capitalism. The President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said, "our enthusiasm for deregulation went too far. History has shown that neither of the extreme versions is right. We need a proper balance that evolves over time".

### **Reflection from the Indian Scenario**

The Indian society did not, from the time of independence, allow free borders for capital and labour movements. It imposed restrictions through license, duty, control over share by foreign companies, limitation of areas in which collaboration was allowed etc. In the wake of globalization, India was forced to enter the main current to a great extent. Still it has been resisting in many areas since its market is quite large due to the population, particularly of the middle class with paying capacity, to which the foreign companies are attracted. It also knows that its technology is quite old and it will easily be replaced by the imported technologies and the local manufacturing industry will be forced to die out. Thus, in spite of liberalization, India did not completely imitate the East and South East Asian countries.

In this context, the question regarding the freedom of the capital and its control by state or society is a very crucial question that touches on the core issues in economics, philosophy and religion. Does individual have unlimited freedom? Is it the individual or the society that should come first? For capitalists, it is the individual; for socialists, it is the society. Should not development be conceived as societal rather than individualistic? What is the benefit if the whole society cannot develop and only a few individuals grow? From a Christian point of view, it is the community that should be transformed into 'Kingdom of God', not merely individuals. If wealth is understood in terms of trusteeship, then it should be used for social mobility, not for

individual development alone. Human person is a social animal. He lives and grows in society, i.e. in relationship with other individuals. So, a holistic growth of society is very important for understanding human development.

On the other hand, too many restrictions stifle individual initiative and give power in the hands of a few. This may lead to authoritarian state that we saw in socialist countries. So, freedom with necessary restrictions to protect the vulnerable sections from exploitation should be considered as a balance between the two extremes. Globalisation does not provide possibility for international counterbalance. If the social market economy which several leaders advocate today is going to be a solution in the future, India can proudly claim that it has been an advocate of such an economy from the time of its independence. Its leaders who laid the early foundation to the Indian economy were neither capitalists nor socialists as understood in the erstwhile communist countries. Rather, they believed both in individual freedom and social control.

Another observation from the Indian scenario is with regard to the spread of consumer culture. Since transfer of technology becomes easier and consumer products of good quality are made available in all societies, it triggers a consumer culture even where such tendencies did not exist. The middle class develop this culture first and the thirst for more consumption increases making people more and more self-interested and pleasure-seeking. The lower classes who are incapable of consuming like the upper classes develop a sort of inferiority complex and jealousy. Here also one needs social control on the production of consumer goods, and the investors should be persuaded to invest more in capital areas.

In a globalized society, the doors are open for cultural exchanges and influences. On the one hand, it may be good to have mutual influences of cultures, so that the positive aspects of every culture enrich the others. The culture that receives becomes more open. However, often it is the negative aspects of cultures that are transmitted to others, which erodes the positive aspects of local culture. Moreover, every culture loses its uniqueness and begins to merge

and form a salad type of culture. In our country, this debate is very lively in the wake of resistance from BJP to the import of some celebrations and practices typical of the West. Even though the pattern of resistance by the BJP is violent and therefore not acceptable, such actions draw attention to an oft-forgotten point regarding the negative influences of cultural globalization.

### **Conclusion**

Though globalization has been helping the market economy, the failure of the latter in recent times has drawn the attention of the capitalist societies to think of the in-built dangers of an uncontrolled system. Human nature being what it is needs controls in order to check the self-interests and motivate it to consider also the welfare of others. Since economic systems are the products of human creativeness, they also need similar checks and controls lest they become too selfish and collapse under the weight of their own self-interest. In a world that will emerge from the present economic crisis, probably the wisdom of those who have been advocating such a middle path will regain recognition. Then India will no longer be considered a dormant country but a watchful wise one which experimented rather successfully by mixing the modern dynamics of the economy with the wisdom of the millennia.

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# **The Covenant Community of the Poor Perspectives in the Old Testament**

**Paul Kalluveetttil**

The author presents here the Old Testament concept of '*anāwîm*'. In the exilic and post-exilic periods the external and internal oppression and exploitation, both political and social, made the life of the majority of the Israelites miserable. Naturally they did have recourse to Yahweh, the champion of the poor. It is wrong to think that the concept of '*anāwîm*' simply indicated spiritual poverty and humility. In the light of the exilic and post-exilic experience of the marginalized, oppressed and exploited existence, there slowly evolved in Israel a theology of the poor. Slowly all Israel, especially the exilic and post-exilic people, came to be called '*anāwîm*'. Through Second Isaiah the Lord promises his '*anāwîm*' liberation and salvation. The '*anāwîm*' are called the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the prisoners, those who mourn and grieve, those who sit in ashes and live in despair. These '*anāwîm*' put their trust on the Day of the Lord when the Messiah would come to free them from every kind of bondage, both in political, economic, social, physical, cultural and religious realms. The author Dr. Paul Kalluveetttil CMI is a well-known scholar of the Old Testament. He is Professor Emeritus of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, and at present resides and teaches at Marymatha Seminary, Thrissur.

## **1. Introduction**

Everyone, at least in theory, will admit that Jesus had envisaged the Church as the community of the poor. This article tries to find out whether it had OT foundations. Can we designate the covenant community of Yahweh as a fellowship of the marginalized, alienated and oppressed people of the society? Most of the former studies

were based on the concept of '*anāwîm*', a group of so-called pious poor<sup>1</sup>. These humble people lived a devout life, and depended upon Yahweh for their subsistence and survival. The scholars thus made a distinction between '*anî*' (economically poor, the oppressed and exploited) and '*anāwîm*' (the pious and humble folk)<sup>2</sup>. Together with J. David Pleins and E. Gerstenberger<sup>3</sup> I also hold that '*anāwîm*' is the original plural of '*anî*'. Thus the term '*anāwîm*' also denotes concrete socio-economic forms of poverty, the reason for which does not necessarily result from an upright life. Rather, it is the product of oppression. Although Yahweh concerned himself about the oppressed, and the '*anāwîm*' would call on him in their oppression, still one should not try to impose the religious connotation of humbleness to the concept. The relation between Yahweh and '*anāwîm*' is a matter of justice, not based on piety. Thus one should not separate the terms '*anî*' and '*anāwîm*'. This study deals with both words. Before focusing the attention on '*anî*' '*anāwîm*' occurrences, I would present in concise form Yahweh's vision for liberation and election of Israel.

## 2. Covenant Community in the Divine Vision

God of the Bible is the God of the outcast and oppressed people. When the Hebrew slaves were systematically exploited and denied the basic life amenities, they groaned in their slavery and cried out (Ex. 2:23). Then the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3: 6) came down to Egypt to liberate the wretched people and make them his own by concluding a covenant with them (Ex.19; 24). This envisaged a new concept of society, God being the head of the family, and the people brothers and sisters, enjoying equal rights and duties<sup>4</sup>.

1 N. Lohfink, "Von der Anavim-Partei Zur Kirche der Armen," *Biblica* 67 (1986) 153-176.

2 For the arguments brought by the authors in defence of this theory, see J.D. Plenins, "Poor, Poverty (OT)", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)*, Vol. V, D.N. Freedman, (ed) New York, 1992, pp.411-413.

3 *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT)*, Vol. XI, G.J. Botterweck... (ed), Grand Rapids, 2001, p.242.

4 Paul Kalluveetttil , "Radicality of Covenant Call" in *The World Becomes the 'Word'* Thrissur, 2009, pp.79-92.

Covenant community had a radically new structure: economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and a religion of God's freedom<sup>5</sup>. The term '*anî*' occurs frequently in the covenant laws; which are intended to protect them<sup>6</sup>. Interest should not be extracted from the marginal groups (Ex.22: 20-26). In Lev.25: 25-38; Dt.23: 20-21 (19-20); 24:6,10-13,17; Ez.18: 7-8, 16-17; also Am.28: 8; Job.24: 9; Ez. 22:12; Pro. 19:17; 22:7; 27:13 '*anî*' is described as someone living in reduced economic circumstances, dependent, and in danger of losing the necessities of life. The covenant community has a grave responsibility towards them (Lev.19: 10; 23:22). "Your hand shall be open to your poor and needy brother" (Dt.15: 11). Thus the covenant laws specially were made to protect and support the poor.

### 3. '*Anî* in Wisdom Texts

The sages stand for the rights of the poor and the lowly. "Do not robe the poor because they are poor or crush the '*anî*' in court, for Yahweh pleads their cause" (Pro. 22:22-23). The king is asked to "defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Pro.31: 9)<sup>7</sup>. A wise woman will open her hand to assist the '*anî*' (Pro. 31:20). In these texts '*anî*' appears as one who is undergoing suffering and exploitation.

The Book of Job speaks of the sufferings of the '*anî*'. They are forced into hiding (Job. 24:4); their children are seized as a pledge (Job.24: 9), and they are murdered (Job.24: 14).

The Book of Psalms has 38 texts on '*anî*'. Such a person is mortally afflicted. Enemies persecute him (Ps. 10:2, 9; 37:14; 109:16). God or the King, his representative is said to deliver the '*anî*' from his affliction (Ps. 35:10; 72:12). The oppressed one turns to Yahweh, asserts his desperate situation, and appeals for vindication.

### 4. The Concept of "Anawim in Psalms

The plural term '*anāwîm*' is identified with 'all Israel' (Ps.72: 2;

5 W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia, 1974.

6 Paul Kalluveettil, "Social Criticism as the Prophetic Role," *Jeevadhara* 19 (1989) 137-140.

7 On the theme of poverty in the social world of the Sages, see J.D. Pleins, *JSOT* 37 (1987) 61-78.

74:19; 147:6; 149:4) or represents a particular group or stratum with in Israel. In Ps.9-10 the term refers to the exploited and persecuted poor. They collectively address Yahweh (Ps.17-18). It seems that these '*anāwîm*' lived during exilic or postexilic times. This group of community speaks of themselves as "the righteous" (Ps.1: 5-6; 34:15; 37:17, 29,39; 69:28; 97:12; 125:3; 146:8), "the faithful" (Ps.30: 4; 31:23; 52:9; 79:2; 85:8; 89:19; 97:10; 116:15; 148:14; 149:1,5,9), "those who fear Yahweh" (Ps.15: 4; 22:23; 33:18; 103:17; 105:11; 118:4), "the upright" (Ps.7: 10, 11:2; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11), and "those whose way is upright" (Ps.37: 14).

Now the question arises. Do these texts speak of '*anāwîm*' as a movement or group embracing poverty? Does it refer to an outgrowth of the suffering and oppression experienced during the exile? According to A. Rahlfs "Israel became '*anāwîm*' through exile; there came into being in Israel a party that voluntarily realized that transformation in its own life<sup>8</sup>.

It is not easy to come to a definite conclusion. One has to take into account the covenant solidarity that existed in Israel. If anyone suffered, the group also suffered. The community looked at the misfortunes of one member as its own distress. The economic politics and the tax system of the Persian Empire during the exilic and postexilic times made the situation of the people wretched<sup>9</sup>. The external and internal oppression and exploitation both political and social made the life of the majority of the Israelites miserable. Naturally they would have recourse to Yahweh, the champion of the poor. According to some authors these '*anāwîm*' seem to have thought of themselves as the true Israel, the chosen remnant<sup>10</sup>. They repudiated the foreign oppressors and their domestic collaborators. Anyhow it is wrong to think that the concept of '*anāwîm*' simply indicated spiritual poverty and humility. We shall return to this issue, after studying the prophetic concept.

8 Quoted by E. Gerstenberger in *TDOT* Vol. XI, p.248.

9 H.G. Kippeberg, *Religion und Klassenbildung in antiken Judäa*, (Studien zur Umwelt des NTs, 1978.

10 E. Gerstenberger, *TDOT*, Vol.XI, pp.248-249.

## 5. The Vision of Prophets

The word ‘*anî*’ appears 25 times in the prophets. It connotes economic oppression (Is. 3:15; Ez.18: 12; 22:29; Am.8: 4), unjust treatment in legal decisions (Is.10:2), and victimization through deception (Is. 32:7). The prophets accuse the authorities for robbing the poor of their possessions (Is. 3:14). According to Ezekiel Yahweh punished Sodom for withholding food from the poor (Ez.16: 49). It is Yahweh who defends the oppressed (Hab.3: 14; Zep. 3:12). Amos stands out as the champion of the marginalized (Am.2: 6ff; 4:1; 5:11-12). In Zec. 7:9-10 the Lord demands: “Administer true justice, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; do not device evil in your hearst against one another.” The prophets make clear that ‘*anâwîm*’ always enjoy Yahweh’s special protection (Is.1: 4; 14:32; 26:6; 29:19; 32:7; 41:17; 49:13; 61:1; Zeph.3: 12; Zec.9: 9).

## 6. Exilic/Post-Exilic Concept

The most significant texts on the poor occur in Is.40-66. The author speaks of the sufferings of the exiles in Babylon. According to him the word ‘*anî*’ stands for the entire nation. He develops two main themes around the term ‘*anî*’. Yahweh’s wrath against his covenant people is temporary (Is. 51:21; 54:11). There will be a new Exodus and liberation (Is. 43:16-20; 63:9-13). The oppressed Israel should be ‘*anî*’ of hope and have to stand firm in the face of the oppressor (Is.49: 17; cf.51:12-14; 22-23). The God of the wretched would come to help them who were suffering political and economic oppression. Yahweh declares in Is.66: 2: “This is the one I cherish: the downtrodden (‘*anî*’) and contrite in heart, who reveres my word”<sup>11</sup>. This text makes clear the authentic portrait of ‘*anî*’. He/she is contrite and respectful of God’s word. A true ‘*anî*’ will be sorry for the sins, confess them and ‘tremble’ (literal translation of *hārad*) at the word of the Lord. The Hebrew term denotes crippling terror and a state of horror<sup>12</sup>. In religious sense this panic is associated with theophanies.

11 B.S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL), London, 2001, pp.529, 540.

12 A. Baumann in *TDOT*, Vol. V, pp.166-170.

Yahweh intervenes on the day of the Lord through prophetic proclamation of judgement. In our text the term seems to describe the inward distress of those who are terrified at the possible consequences of transgressing the divine commandments. Thus the post-exilic community is a fellowship of '*anāwîm*' who are sorry for their past sins and keep the divine precepts with awe. They had not forgotten the terrible curses which had fallen upon them at the transgression of the covenant laws. The pitiable situation of '*anî*' is described in Is.41: 17 and 58:7. The '*anî*' are those who search for water, but have none, and their tongues are parched with thirst. Now Yahweh will not forsake the suffering people. "I will open up streams on the bare hills, fountains on the plains; I will turn the wilderness into pools of water, the arid land into springs of water" (Is.41: 17-18). In Is. 58:7 the poor are depicted as homeless. Thus the '*anî*' in II Isaiah bears the brunt of political and economic oppression. Here we do not find a theology of humility in the more detached or spiritualised sense.

## 7. '*Anāwîm* Community

The OT does not seem to use the phrase '*anāwîm Yahweh*' anywhere. But the idea that the poor belong to the Lord is implied in the whole Old Testament. One does not forget that the OT never glorified or trivialized poverty. In the light of the exilic and post-exilic experience of the marginalized, oppressed and exploited existence, there slowly evolved in Israel a theology of the poor. The sufferings of the majority of the people, especially the impoverished rural population were incorporated into the liturgical texts in the prophets and Psalter, where Yahweh is depicted as championing the cause of the marginalized. This "Father of orphans and protector of widows" (Ps. 68:5;Dt.10: 17-19; Lam 5:1-3; Is.63: 8,16; 64:8) stood for these wretched folk. Slowly all Israel, especially the exilic and post-exilic people came to be called '*anāwîm*' (Is.14: 32; 26:1-6; 41:17; 49:13; 61:1-7;Zeph.2: 3;Ps.18: 27; 69:30-33; 72:2; 74:18-23; 147:3-6; 149:4). These '*anāwîm*' were the most vulnerable folk of the society. Widows, orphans, foreigners (Ex.22: 22ff; Dt.24: 19-21; Job.24: 3) the blind, the lame, and others with other physical defects (Lev.19: 14; Ps.146:8), prisoners (Ps. 68:6; 69:33; Job. 36:8), smallholders (Ikgs.21: 1-13),

debtors (I Sam.22: 2) and labourers (Lev.19: 13; Dt. 24:14) belong to this list. The few wealthy people should show solidarity with these beloved of Yahweh. Through Second Isaiah the Lord promises his ‘*anāwîm* liberation and salvation. Their God will execute his *mišphât* on those who try to crush them. The Hebrew term *mišphât*, which is usually translated as righteousness, denotes salvation for the upright, and punishment for those who try to stand against Yahweh’s plan of salvation<sup>13</sup>. Deutero-Isaiah asks the exiled poor to live in joy and peace as if Yahweh had already executed his act of salvation<sup>14</sup>. They should sing the hymns of praise - the traits of those who are glorified by God

### **8. The Figure of ‘Ebed Yahweh**

The first ‘*ebed* Yahweh song (Is.42: 1-4) presents the figure of the future saviour of the needy remnant<sup>15</sup>. He is the chosen and beloved of Yahweh, who upholds him and bestows his spirit upon him. The task of ‘*ebed* is mentioned three times: he is to bring forth righteousness to the nations (v.1d) on earth (v.4b) and truth (v.3c). Thus he will be concerned with not only Israel, but also the nations. In the light of the context (this is made clear in v.3a and b: “The broken reed he does not break, and the dimly burning wick he does not quench”. Thus the ‘*ebed* is called to heal the broken people and make shine those who burn dimly) one can conclude that the term ‘nations’ refer to the marginalized and oppressed folk among them. The whole earth will enjoy the fruit of his salvation. The nature will flourish at his guidance, since nobody can exploit the earth and its wealth. During the rule of the ‘*ebed* Yahweh’s *mišphât* (the OT concept of salvation will grow into the notion of grace and mercy in the New Testament) will become the only truth. Thus the ‘*anāwîm* community is destined to be the children of salvation and glorious celebration. This becomes clear from Is. 61:1-3.

### **9. The Anointed Redeemer of ‘Anāwîm**

To the post-exilic community of *anāwîm* the Trito-Isaiah promises integral liberation and salvation<sup>16</sup>. An unnamed person speaks:

13 B. Johnson in *TDOT*, Vol. IX, pp.86-98.

14 C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (OTL) London, 1969, pp.23-27.

15 H. Ringgren in *TDOT*, Vol.X, pp.396-405.

16 R.B. Sloan, *The Favourable Year of the Lord*, Montana, 1977.

“The spirit of the Lord Yahweh is upon me,  
because he has anointed me,  
to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives,  
and release for the prisoners,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour

and the day of vengeance of our God,

to comfort all who mourn

and provide for those who grieve in Zion -

to bestow on them a crown of beauty, instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,

and a garment of praise instead of spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour” (Is.61:1-3).

This manifesto of liberation for the ‘*anāwîm* of Yahweh demands a detailed study. I merely point out the pertinent points in the task of the Anointed One. His role is:

- to preach good news to the poor
- to bind up the broken hearted
- to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners
- to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour and his day of vengeance
- to comfort all who mourn
- to provide for those who grieve a crown of beauty, and the oil of gladness, and a garment of praise.

The ‘*anāwîm* are called the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the prisoners, those who mourn and grieve, those who sit in ashes and live in despair. The Messiah has a twofold function, to preach and to act. He has to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, and the year of the Lord’s favour and day of his vengeance. At the same time he should bind up the broken-hearted, comfort all who mourn and provide them a crown of beauty, the oil of gladness and a garment of praise. Thus the Anointed is called to make the ‘*anāwîm* oaks of righteousness, and Yahweh’s planting for the display of his splendour. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, Yahweh through the Messiah “disrupts any

circumstances of social bondage and exploitation, overthrows ruthless orderings of public life, and authorizes new circumstances of dancing freedom, dignity and justice. The verbs of deliverance in the text (*ys'*, *pah*; *yš'*, '*lh*, *g'l*) refuse to accept as a given any circumstance of oppression”<sup>17</sup>.

## 10. Concluding Reflections

Yahweh liberated the desperate slaves of Egypt in order to make them the members of the covenant community. They had to live as an egalitarian society, with a radically new structure: economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and a religion of God’s freedom. The Lord had in his mind a family, he being its head, and others his children, who as brothers and sisters could enjoy equal rights and duties. Yahweh lived among them in the temple. They are requested to lead a life of those who cling to God for everything, for land, prosperity, peace and progeny. In that sense one may call them an ‘*anāwîm* community both in the material and spiritual sense.

In Babylon Israel lived as slaves who had no rights and privileges. Even when they returned to Jerusalem the majority of them were constrained to lead a poor and wretched life, economically, socially and politically. These oppressed persons began to consider themselves as the genuine remnant. This ‘*anāwîm* community looked for their total liberation, and eagerly waited for the ‘*ebed* Yahweh of Is. 42:1-4 and the Anointed One of Is. 61:1-3. It is wrong to say that they embraced physical poverty as a voluntary religious choice. The circumstances made them poor. These ‘*anāwîm* put their trust on the Day of the Lord when the Messiah will come to free them from every kind of bondage, both in political, economic, social, physical, cultural and religious realms. Then there will be a reversal of fortunes, the first will be the last, the master the servant, the proud humble, the hungry satiated, and the rich poor (I Sam.2: 3-9; Lk.1: 46-55).

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17 W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia, 1997.

# **Jesus and the Poor**

**George Edayadiyil**

In today's world the economic security scale is in a constant change, which only acerbates the plight of the poor and the marginalized. In this context Jesus, the poor One, has to touch our consciences and our vision for being better witnesses to Jesus in our times. With this in mind the author, Dr. George Edayadiyil CMI introduces the person and the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels in this article, "Jesus and the Poor." In the OT times, people took it for granted the differing social status. In Judaism of Jesus' time the term "righteousness" was synonymous with the giving of alms to the poor. But in Jesus we find a radical teaching concerning the poor and the rich. He saw wealth as a hindrance to enter into the kingdom of God. The careful use of wealth with a change of heart alone can make one righteous before God. Zacchaeus, the rich, and the poor widow are the true models of Christian discipleship, and they show the Christian way in our times.

## **1 Introduction**

We live in a world where the gap between the poor and the rich is growing wider and the number of the poor is all too quickly increasing even with all the scientific and technological development at man's disposal. Many are in the web of poverty from which they cannot even dream of an eventual escape. Today many seem convinced of the privileges that wealth can bring, and hence it has become an object of adoration, both in the spiritual and secular realms. But all do not share the same attitude towards wealth and poverty. So we have conflicting ideologies. Both the rich and the poor are restless in a globalized, market oriented and consumerist society. The consumerist

mentality grows unabated and is in danger of devouring the whole society and destroying its fabrics. Economic affluence creates a culture of greed. And greed has made many bankrupt and desperate. They are poor not because of any social oppression but because they made themselves poor. The saying is true: "we have enough to satisfy all, but not to feed the greed of all". In today's world the comfort/security scale is in a constant movement of change, which only worsens the plight of the poor and the marginalized. In this environment Jesus, the poor One, has to enlighten our consciences and our vision.

In the Gospels, we have the life and teachings of Jesus which reflect his special concern for the poor. In the Acts of the Apostles we have the idealist picture of a Christian community which shared everything in common and there was no needy among them (Acts 2:42-47; 5:1-11, 6:1-7). The early Christian community was a community of the poor. In the Letters of the NT, we find the tensions and divisions that resulted from the economic disparity in the community. Later NT writings reveal that the idealistic community of Acts almost fades away as the people encountered the new social contexts and realities.

## **2 Socio-economic Situation of the Jewish World at the Time of Jesus**

In the first century Palestinian world of Jesus, the socio-economic situation was at a low ebb. The socio-economic disparity made it a land of unequals with many sects and interests. There was a huge gap between the rich and the poor. The Covenantal Laws stressed that the Israelite had to show mercy to the marginalized, outcasts, widows, orphans, the poor, and aliens (Ex 20:10; Lev 19:9-10,34; Dt 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:11-14; 24:17-22; 26:12-15). The primary reason for such a demand was that they themselves were slaves (Ex 22:21; 23:9) in Egypt and it was the mercy of God that saved and led them to the promised land. The rich were content with giving alms to the poor. But a genuine attempt to improve the quality of life of the poor was not on the agenda of the society and of the rich in particular. As in our times, the rich tried to hold fast to their wealth and the sharing of wealth was not in anyone's priority, except for a small minority.

## 2.1 The Poor and the Rich

The most common word for the “poor” in the NT is *ptōchos*, “one who is poor enough to be a beggar and needs help.” It was not a social class. The poor included small farmers, day laborers, beggars, slaves, villagers, outcasts, aliens, orphans, etc. Oppression was seen as a major reason for poverty in both the OT and NT. In Luke we find Jesus contrasting the economically rich and the poor. The topic of wealth was of great interest to Jesus because in his social world wealth had a lot of ramifications. Among the wealthy there were two groups: the observant Jewish religious leaders and aristocracy; and the wealthy, associated with the Herodians and the Romans, whom the Jews considered as outcasts.<sup>1</sup> In the Bible, owning land was the measure of wealth of a person. The wealthy using their power, oppressed the poor. James (Jam 5:1-6) severely criticizes the rich for gaining wealth at the expense of the poor. The poor are the oppressed because of their economic status and yet they were staunch in faith. They were the persecuted disciples of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Practice of Charity in Judaism

The practice of charity in Judaism included: i) the private charitable acts such as giving arms to beggars, forgiving debts, etc. ii) charitable acts organized through groups; and iii) religious charitable works done through religious authority. Only at a later time in Judaism do we find a highly organized system of collections and distribution of it to the poor. There were different ways of giving alms. Apart from the customary almsgiving throughout the year, there was the tithe for the poor given every third year. Further the observant Jews allowed the poor to glean in their fields and left their fields fallow in the jubilee year, the poor being allowed to gather what grew on it.<sup>3</sup>

Giving of alms was so important in Judaism that the term “righteousness” was synonymous with the giving of alms. “The poor

1 P.H. Davids, “Rich and Poor”, 701-2.

2 D.E. Hol Werda, “Poor” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3:907.

3 P.H. Davids, “Rich and Poor”, 704.

did more for the wealthy than the wealthy for the poor', for the poor provided the righteous with a means of gaining merit with God."<sup>4</sup> The people believed that the world stands on three things, namely, Law, worship and charity. "Those who give alms sacrifice a thank offering" (Sir 35:4). In Judaism, alms were given not to improve the quality of life, but as a means of rescuing one from misfortune and to restore the former state of life. They took for granted the differing social status, and thus the poor peasant would not be supported on the same level as an impoverished aristocrat.<sup>5</sup>

### **3 Jesus and the Poor**

#### **3.1 Jesus was poor**

The sacrifice that Jesus' parents offered in the temple (Lk 2:24) amply illustrates that his family was poor. As a skilled worker, Joseph might not have found it very difficult to sustain his family back in Nazareth, but surely he did not qualify for an entry in the upper middle class. Jesus was a man without land (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58). As a carpenter he might have been a day laborer. So he was poor. Even the nature and social status of Jesus' disciples and the fact that he was rejected by his hometown of Nazareth (Mk 6:3-4), attest to his low socio-economic background.

The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus' way of life as one of self-chosen poverty (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58) and that identifies him with the poor of the Beatitudes. Jesus whole life was identified with the poor and he was in every sense a typical poor (*anawim*) of the OT. His life was one that was deliberately based on the providence of the Heavenly Father.<sup>6</sup> The rich try to become richer whereas the poor try to become rich. In contrast, Jesus, although rich in all its ramifications (as one who is from the Father) emptied himself taking the form of a servant. He became poor literally and he upheld the blessedness of being poor. By that, he established that wealth has no meaning in itself and it can even be a curse (LK 6:24) as it may take one away from God.

4 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 704.

5 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 704.

6 H.H. Eßer, "Poor" *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Vol.2:825

### **3.2 Jesus and Wealth**

#### **Wealth a Hindrance**

The Gospels speak about the dangers of wealth. In Luke we find three attitudes towards wealth: total renunciation, a warning against the dangers of wealth, and the prudent use of wealth.<sup>7</sup> It is relevant that we never find any kind of blessing pronounced on the rich; rather we find curses on them (Lk 6:24-25). They are cursed not because of any acts of injustice, but just because of their abundance of riches. It is the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame who partake in the messianic banquet (Lk 14:21). Never do we find in the Gospels the extolling of wealth.<sup>8</sup>

It is very difficult for the rich man to respond to Jesus' call, even though he can hear him (Lk 18:18-25). His legal righteousness in no way helped him to follow Jesus. Possessions are seen as something that chokes the word of God (Mk 4:18-19) and can work against God. So it is impossible to serve both mammon and God (Mt 6:24). Hence the question is not simply a matter of giving both wealth and God proper places in life, but both cannot go together. We have the paradox: wealth is seen as a mark of divine blessing and yet can be a hindrance to enter into the Kingdom of God. So the piety-prosperity equation of the OT fails.<sup>9</sup> Wealth is a means of power and exploitation of others. So it is against God's sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Jesus was critical of the rich, especially those who used legal interpretation of the Torah to oppress the poor of the society, thus putting even God on the side of the oppressive rich. The rich became oppressors in their selfish attempt to keep and amass wealth.

#### **Wealth is Seductive**

Wealth is powerful enough to cast its magic spell on all. Accumulated wealth is considered a treasure (*thēsauros*) in which one deposits all his hope and trust. It is here that Jesus speaks of the paradoxical nature of the treasures of this world and the treasures of

7 T. D. Hanks, "Poor, Poverty" *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5:417.

8 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 706-7.

9 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 705.

10 Jose Cardenes Pallares, *A Poor Man Called Jesus*, 68.

the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:33f); of the need of changing one's focus and priority (Mt 6:33) and of total trust in God (6:34). Earthly preoccupation to store treasures is condemned (Jam 5:3).

Jesus personifies wealth as 'Mammon' (*mamōnas*), which literally means possessions.<sup>11</sup> Wealth was considered as idol (prophets viewed it as seductive) that lured people away from total dependence on God (Lk 12:19) and wealth becomes an end in itself. The worldly prudence of the rich man (Lk 12:16-21) makes him a fool in Jesus' eyes. He hasn't done anything wrong. He just did what we all do. Instead of giving to the poor and thus becoming rich in God (12:21), "so is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich before God"). He thought of serving himself by relaxing, eating, drinking and making merry (12:19).<sup>12</sup> If one wants to follow Jesus then he must be at the unconditional service of the poor. One who is burdened with wealth cannot follow Jesus. Jesus radicalizes the need to be free from wealth and calls for the necessity of giving it to the victims of money and power: the poor. Jesus has come not just to console the poor, but with a clarion call for conversion of the heart, inviting all to the kingdom of God.<sup>13</sup>

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) illustrates the impossibility of serving both God and wealth at the same time. The word "Lazarus" literally means, 'God helps'. Abraham's answer to the rich man is an eye opener: "Remember that during your lifetime you received good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here and you are in agony" (16:25). For Jesus, wealth was not an end in itself but was a means of serving those who were deprived of it, and thus the prudent use of possessions is what Jesus is calling for. The prudent use of wealth will help us to be rich in the kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup>

### **Prudent Use of Wealth**

Even though the rich man had all the means and opportunity as

11 J. Eichler and C. Brown, "Possessions" *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol.2:829-31.

12 Albert Gelin, *The Poor of Yahweh*, 99; P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 705.

13 Jose Cardenes Pallares, *A Poor Man Called Jesus*, 68.

14 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 705.

Zacchaeus, he ignored Lazarus. Hence he suffered damnation. It is a question of accountability. Jesus' instruction (Lk 12:33) demands that wealth be shared on earth to have riches in heaven. This is the general teaching on wealth that we find in the NT. The story of the rich young man illustrates the hurdles that possessions place on our way forward. Jesus did not condemn wealth. But it can make one a prisoner of oneself. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:25). In the Palestinian world, the camel was the largest animal and the eye of the needle the smallest opening. Jesus uses deliberate images to show the contradictions. If someone enters heaven, then that is the work of God. "For God all things are possible" (Mk 10:27). Impossibility becomes possible when God enters into the picture. This is the story of Zacchaeus. In giving away his riches (Lk 19:8) he was saved by God (19:9).<sup>15</sup> The rich did not heed Jesus' preaching as they were self-dependent. The humble rich who show generosity will inherit the kingdom (Zacchaeus).

In Jesus' teaching on wealth we find a preeminent comparison between security (treasure) in this world and the world to come. "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it is gone, they will welcome you into eternal dwellings" (Lk 16:9). It may imply that the prudent use of wealth is to help the poor while one is able (alive) so that when he dies he may be welcomed into heaven because of the merit of his good deeds. This practice of helping the poor was a Jewish tradition at the time of Jesus. But Jesus' teaching on wealth is far more radical and foundational than the practice of his time.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.3 Jesus and the Poor**

The Synoptic Gospels give a consistent picture of Jesus' attitude towards the poor and the rich. Jesus did not avoid celebrations (Jn 2; Mt 11:19; Lk 5:29). He was not an ascetic, like John the Baptist. Jesus neither glorified poverty for its own sake nor the unbridled use

15 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 705-6.

16 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 706.

of wealth. Further he speaks of the kingdom of God as the time of fullness. Of the four evangelists, Luke gives Jesus' important teachings on wealth and poverty. In Luke, blessings and woes are presented in contrast (Lk 6:20-26).

The term poor can have different meanings: the materially poor and the oppressed, the spiritually poor, the people of Israel ,in general, Jesus' disciples, various sects of Judaism of Jesus' time who called themselves poor, namely, the Qumran communities (4Qp Ps 37) and Pharisaic communities (ref. *Psalms of Solomon*). All of them considered themselves as the oppressed ones. This term poor in all its nuances referred to people who experienced some kind of helplessness in their life whether it was the materially poor or spiritually poor or the people of Israel in general or some sects of Judaism or even the disciples of Jesus themselves. At any rate, the term is not a metaphorical usage, but an actual one (Lk 6:20-22). Jesus did not use any language that includes only the materially poor and excludes the materially rich, but rather his language refers to all those who actually experience any of kind of oppression or helplessness.<sup>17</sup>

### **Poor are Jesus' Own**

In the last judgment of Mt 25:31-46, we find the little ones as Jesus' own. He is the one who is hungry, thirsty and naked. God is presented as the one who is with the poor and the oppressed. The poor man Lazarus is the one whom "God helps". The Poor are God's own and He is their champion. The poor are at times synonymous with the 'people of God'. In the socio-economic and political situation of the first Christian communities they are the 'poor of God'. Jesus considered his disciples as the poor, 'the little ones' to whom he is going to give the kingdom (LK 6:20; Mt 5:3). The people of God identified as 'the poor' were poor for many reasons: social and economic deprivation, voluntary poverty (Mt 19:23-30), persecution, total dependence and trust in God for all kinds of deliverance, including material and spiritual poverty. Being poor (LK 9:58), and as the one who cares for the poor (2 Cor 8:9), Jesus himself is the ground and

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17 P.H. Davids, "Rich and Poor", 704,6-7.

model for the people of God.<sup>18</sup> And he wants his disciples to form a new community of brethren, not of unequals (Jn 15:15; Mt 20:25-28; Gal 3:8). Jesus' call is one for the creation of a new world order of righteousness which knows no barriers, the kingdom of God on earth. He himself is the cornerstone of this new order. But in history we tend to leave this clarion call of Jesus unnoticed.

### **Jesus' Special Concern for the Poor**

God's concern and care for the poor was a consistent theme in both the OT and NT. Throughout his life Jesus showed special concern for the poor and he taught the same lesson to the disciples (Mk 14:15; Jn 13:29). In the very beginning of Jesus' ministry this special mission for the poor is underlined (Lk 4:18-21; Is 61:1-3). These are the ones whom he comforts: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Lk 6:20-22). In Mathew he may be referring to people who are seeking dependence on God (Mt 5:3). Here the term "poor in spirit" shows that Mathew (5:3) is not very keen on the problem of actual want.<sup>19</sup> This caused Christians to spiritualize poverty. But in Mt 25, we find a radical teaching where the very entry into heaven is dependent on one's service to the poor, needy and outcasts. Over against this, Luke shows special concern for the materially poor.

The Gospels present Jesus repeatedly reaching out to those at the bottom of the social pyramid - poor people, women, Samaritans, lepers, children, prostitutes and tax collectors. For him such less privileged are the neighbours: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed." It is by caring for these less privileged that one can store treasure in heaven (LK 12:32-34; Mt 6:20). The conscious use of wealth will make one rich in God: "Sell your possession and give to the poor". Jesus' own practice and that of his disciples of giving alms was evident when Judas went out at the Last Supper, the other disciples thought that he went out to

18 D.E. Hol Werda, "Poor", 908.

19 Ernst Bammel, "ptochos", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 6: 904.

give alms to the poor (Jn 13:39).<sup>20</sup> Just as in the Gospels, in Paul ‘remembering the poor’ (Gal 2:10) was an integral part of the Gospel preaching.<sup>21</sup>

Almsgiving was part of the Jewish dharma. The OT says: “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done” (Proverbs 19:17). Alms were given not just as a righteous deed for right living and a kind act towards the needy, but also as a religious deed of storing up treasures in heaven. Inviting the poor to the feast merits reward (Lk 14:14). The rich fool, the rich young man, and the rich man in the story of Lazarus are all stories of failure in storing up treasures in heaven. Concern for the poor is the best investment policy of Jesus - Give away so as to have a solid investment in heaven. Mercy towards the poor is a criterion for getting into heaven (Mt 25:31-46; Jam 2:13). It is through the poor that we can have a mysterious encounter with God. For God, the poor are his own. Jesus teaches that you have to take risks and to go an extra mile to show concern for the oppressed (Lk 10:29-37).

The hope of the poor has been realized in Jesus’ inauguration of the Jubilee year. It is a time of freedom for all from all kinds of bondage (Lk 4:18). This good news of Jesus is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (LK 4:43). It is good news for both the materially poor and the spiritually poor. Luke focuses on the reversal of the social and economic conditions of the poor, whereas Mathew focuses on the spiritual and ethical condition of the poor. These have to be seen in the light of the OT concept of the poor. The true realization of this reversal of fortunes takes place in the eschatological era (Lk 14:21).<sup>22</sup> Jesus did not compromise with the concern of the poor. Celebrations are exceptional acts (Mt 26:6-13), but the concern for the poor is a daily act.

### **Jesus' call for Change of Heart**

Zacchaeus story (Lk 19:1-10) is the best example of the change of heart - to invite Jesus, the Word, into one’s life and be transformed

20 P.H. Davids, “Rich and Poor”, 707.

21 Saviour Menachery, *Pauline Preaching of an Integral Gospel*, 183.

22 D.E. Hol Werda, “Poor”, 907.

by the dialogical and challenging word of God. The Greek word *logos* normally implies a ‘dialogue’ or ‘conversation’ between the sender and the receiver of the word. The hearers of the word are challenged (Lk 8:8) to come to a living relationship with God, thus transforming their values and visions. They are to be ‘doers of the word, and not hearers only’ (Jam 1:22; see also Mt 5:19; 7:24-27).

God’s word is an invitation that cannot be met with indifference or silence, but must be accepted. Often the human response is not positive: they do not “have ears to hear” (Jer 5:21) or “hearts to receive” (Jer 5:23) the word, and this leads to sin and punishment. Here the relationship is broken (Is 59:2).

Conversion happens only through internal transformation (Lk 19:8) and the giving of one’s possessions and the giving of alms (Lk 12:33) which in turn brings salvation (Lk 19:9). The first Christian communities lived such a life and they cared for the poor and needy (Acts 2:44f; 4:34f; Dt 15:4). Moral blindness in the rich can be very grave. The rich man in the parable would not be convinced of the need of sharing the wealth even if one raised from the dead warns (Lk 16:19-31). Jesus’ teaching on the eschatological blessing of the poor is not a spiritualizing interpretation to help the poor escape the concerns of the present day and to keep the status quo.

## Call to Discipleship

A healthy attitude towards wealth and its giving away are necessary to be a disciple of Christ. There is the giving up of things counted as valuable: the disciples left everything (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:1-11; Jn 1:35-51; Lk 13:33); the rich young man, even though he kept all the commandments, failed to give away his possessions to the poor and follow Jesus (Mt 19:16-22; Lk 18:18-24). The greatest problem with wealth is that it prevents one from following Jesus (Mt 19:22). If one wants to follow Jesus, he has to stop running after wealth that perishes (Mt 6:19) and to sacrifice everything for the Kingdom of God (Mt 13:44-46). He will be rewarded a hundredfold in the Kingdom (Mt 19:23-30). For the new righteousness presented by Jesus, it is necessary that the disciples care for the poor.

Being unattached to wealth can alone make one a disciple of Jesus. On their own mission journeys, the disciples were to go without

any provisions (Mt 10:1-16; Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-12). The life of Jesus and the life of the discipleship that he envisaged were the revealed in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>23</sup> The widow (Mk 12:41-44) is a model disciple. She has absolute trust in God, more than in wealth, power or anything else. She risked all and in that, she gave everything to serve God. She is the model poor from whom the disciples have to learn the lesson of wealth and poverty. She offered true worship to God (Mk 12:33). For her and for all who are poor, what counts is God. In her, Jesus and his disciples find a complete reversal of values in contradiction to everything that motivates the class society. Here Jesus gives his disciples the lesson of true discipleship.<sup>24</sup> For one who is rich with material possessions, it is difficult to be “rich toward God” (Lk 12:21). A follower of Jesus cannot be a follower of wealth (Mk 10:25).

### **Dependence on God**

Jesus saw wealth as a hindrance to entry into heaven and he announced blessing on the poor. He could see in them God’s own people as they put their trust in the providence of God. Trust in the providence of God was one of the pillars of Jesus’ ethical teachings. Whether rich or poor, what is needed is to trust in God and seek His ways: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Mt 6:33). Jesus not only proclaimed the blessedness of dependence on the providence of God, but also he lived accordingly and encouraged his disciples to walk on the same path, where God is all in all. It is trust in God that gives one the courage to give. Lack of trust will lead one to the service of wealth. The natural world itself witnesses (Lk 12:22-31) to our call to depend on God. Human anxiety and the search for security never provide a right solution (Mt 6:27). Assurance that the Heavenly Father knows what we need is the best security (Mt 6:32; LK 12:30).<sup>25</sup> Trust in God is the fundamental aim of Jesus teaching on poverty and wealth.

23 C. Brown, “Poor” *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Vol.2:825; J. Eichler and C. Brown, “Possessions”, 833; P.H. Davids, “Rich and Poor”, 708.

24 Jose Cardenes Pallares, *A Poor Man Called Jesus*, 58-9.

25 P.H. Davids, “Rich and Poor”, 706,7.

## Conclusion

In Jesus, as seen particularly in the Gospel of Luke, we find the radical social concern of Christian preaching. May be Luke gives the clearest face to the social concerns of Jesus and his preaching. It further reflects the social context and commitment of Lucan preaching. The topic “Jesus and the Poor” can supply some of the missing links for true Christian living in our times and can stimulate us Christians to give a committed response to the plight of the poor and the needy. The attraction of wealth is so strong that without God’s help, it is hard to over come it. Jesus’ own teaching on wealth amply illustrates the danger inherent in the unbridled attachment to wealth and power. The careful use of wealth alone can make one righteous before God. Zacchaeus, the rich, and the poor widow are the true models of Christian discipleship, and they show the Christian way.

# **Pauline Collection for the Poor: A Paradigm for Preaching the Gospel and Panacea for Present Economic Crisis**

**Saviour Menachery**

The author by an analysis of the different terms connected with the “Collection for the Poor” in Pauline letters makes it undoubtedly clear that the collection for the poor was not an option, but integral to *apostolic preaching*. It was not mere social service, but an expression of the one Gospel by creating one community of love and sharing constitutive of various nations. Pauline exemplar remains not only as a perfect paradigm for preaching gospel but even serves as an effective panacea for the problems of the poorest of the world in the context of global recession and unjust distribution of wealth. Dr. Saviour Menachery CMI holds a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, and a Doctorate in Biblical Theology from Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome. At present he teaches the New Testament at Pontifical College of St. Bede, Rome and at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram Bangalore, India.

In the present economic crisis, many world leaders have been more concerned with ‘bailing out’ their ‘Banking Systems’ than “bailing out” the poorest of the world. In such a scenario the Church, the body of Christ (1 Cor 12-27), has an indispensable duty to imitate her master, who identified himself with the poor in order to make them rich (2 Cor 8,9) and to consider seriously the ways to translate the gospel of Jesus into the present context. The union between Christ the Head and Church His body (1 Cor 12, 12-27) flashed upon Saul on his way to Damascus, when the risen Christ encountered him with an unexpected question: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute

me?" (Acts 9,4). It impelled Paul, with the experience of "the economic crisis" in Jerusalem (Gal 2,1-10), to undertake a massive collection for the poor. This article, analyzing various expressions employed by Paul to describe his collection for the poor, investigates how the collection, was not an appendix to the Pauline preaching initiated merely at the request of the "Pillars" in Jerusalem (Gal 2,9-10), but an integral dimension of his preaching the gospel and an apt remedy to alleviate the poor pressed by the global recession and unjust distribution of economic resources.

### **1. *Logeia* (=Financial Contribution)**

With the discovery of more Greek papyri, *logeria*,<sup>1</sup> occurring only in 1 Cor 16,1 is confirmed as a technical term for the collection of taxes or voluntary contributions.<sup>2</sup> In spite of having this technical term for collection, Paul was reluctant to make the most of it to propagate his collection. Instead, he preferred to use terms and phrases rich in theological content. This preference is not incidental, suggested by the *modus operandi* proposed to the believers in Galatia and Corinth: A collection was made on the first day of the week<sup>3</sup> and everyone had to take part in it by setting aside a portion of income (1 Cor 16,1-2).

Various reasons have been suggested to explain Paul's request for the collection to be on first day of the week, which was the weekly payday,<sup>4</sup> and therefore most likely to bring forth a good amount; a

1 Before such discoveries, due to the rarity of this term in Greek literature, it was erroneously considered that the term *logeria* was coined by Paul himself for the collection he undertook on behalf of the poor. Cf. T. C. Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1885), 462.

2 J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997) § 3048.

3 J. C. Hurd thinks that Paul suggested the first day of the week, due to the reluctance of the Corinthians to have the collection. J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965), 202.

4 J. Héring, *First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 1962), 183.

collection on some other day of the week or month could have affected the sum due to daily expenditure. Christians also gathered as a community on the first day, thus facilitating the common collection. However, such practical reasons, appear to be mere conjecture, not in tune with the context of Paul's instruction to the various churches of Galatia and Corinth (1 Cor 16,1-4). In 1 Cor 16,2, Paul clearly instructs every member of the community to keep up the amount of money.<sup>5</sup> Though the amount was set aside on the first day of the week, it was not collected on Sunday; instead, each one had to set it aside at home privately. So there would have been significant theological reasons for proposing the collection to be on the first day of the week, which, in all Gospel traditions was linked to the resurrection of Jesus (Matt 28,1; Mark 16,2; Luke 24,1; John 20,1). It was also a day of supreme Christological significance for the Pauline Christians as is evident in Acts 20,7. The insistence that the Christian community should set aside money on this day itself, rather than some other day of the week appears to have a link with this Christological import.

The resurrection paved the way for the first day after Jewish Sabbath to become "*the first day*" of all days and "*the first feast*" of all Christian feasts for early Christians. Thus, the day of the Sun came to be known in early Christianity as the day of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Setting aside a portion of income for the poor at home on the day of resurrection was a tangible way of celebrating Christian existence. Paul wanted everyone in the community to set aside a certain level of savings according to each individual's economic viability and prosperity (1 Cor 16,2). His insistence that *all* believers be actively involved in the collection, not merely a few economically privileged ones, mirrors the cross section of people from various social and economic levels in the community (1 Cor 1,26-28), including a significant number of artisans and day labourers (1 Cor 1,26-28). 1 Cor 16,1-2 suggests that Paul had given his instruction, not only in Corinth, but also in the various churches of Galatia where he had previously evangelised. Irrespective of the economical status or the

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5 The phrase "by him" (*par' heautō*) means one's house.

6 Justin, *Apologiae I*, 67 in PG 6: 429.

geographical context of the believers, this general instruction was not a result of Paul's impersonal or insensitive attitude, but was linked to the perspective that every Christian in any place or time must personalise and solidify the Lord's Day. The life he lived on the other six days of the week had to be conferred to "*the first day*", in a tangible way. The *modus operandi* of the collection envisaged by Paul is a *modus vivendi* of faith in the risen Lord and in such life style the gospel of Jesus became expressive as a real *dynamics* of life (Rom 1,16). The above-mentioned Christological connection to *logeia* (financial contribution) in 1 Cor 16,1-4 is again supported by Paul's use of *charis*<sup>7</sup>(=collection) instead of *logeia* in the same context (1 Cor 16,3).

## 2. *Charis* (Grace = Collection of Money)

In relation to the collection of money, *charis* is used solely in Corinthian correspondence, and mostly in the singular form, especially in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.<sup>8</sup> It is one of the two favourite words employed by Paul to denote collection for the poor.<sup>9</sup> No other biblical author uses *charis* as frequently as Paul, who used it one hundred

7 S. Joubert says: "The fact that they (believers) had to put away money for this purpose (collection) on Sundays, determined the nature of the collection as a *religious undertaking*. It was not merely a *logeia*; it was also *charis*; a gift of love on the part of the Corinthians (1 Cor 16,3), and, as such, also formed part of their religious responsibilities." S. Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection*, WUNT, vol. 124, eds., M. Hengel und O. Hofius (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 160.

8 Though the term *charis* is used 24x in the letter to Romans, not in a single instance does Paul use it for the collection in this letter. Such an absence becomes very conspicuous in the light of the fact that, in the same letter, in a very small paragraph, related to the collection (Rom 15,25-32) he has used at least five other different terms for the collection (cf. Rom 15,25.26.27.28.31). Out of 18 occurrences in 2 Corinthians, 10 occurrences are in the context of the collection of money (2 Cor 8,1.4.6.7.9.16.19; 9,8.14.15).

9 The other favourite term is *diakonia*.

times in total in his epistles. Out of eleven occurrences of *charis*<sup>10</sup> in the context of collection in the Corinthian correspondence, four of them (1 Cor 16,3; 2 Cor 8,6.7.19) refer directly to the collection for the poor as a gift or gracious work. In 2 Cor 8,9 *charis* means the grace of God that took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Four times it means the grace of God actualised in Christian living (Cor 8,1.4 and 9,8.14) and twice it expresses thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 8,16; 9,15). The Christological links between *logeia* (=financial contribution) and *charis* (grace = collection) must have emanated from Paul's understanding of radical grace or the gospel, which was made available to all on the cross (Rom 3,21-26) thus cancelling barriers such as social status, race, colour, gender, and so forth (1 Cor 12,13; Gal 3,28; Col 3,11). Therefore, the use of *charis* has to be viewed from the Pauline understanding of the gospel and its implications for collection. In 2 Cor 8,1 Paul began his appeal for the collection, referring to the *charis* of God, which had been graciously manifested in the Macedonian churches. Here *charis* stood for 'the whole salvific event' accomplished by Jesus. Besides being the key hermeneutic concept of God's love, it served as a *terminus technicus* for God's action of salvation in Christ<sup>11</sup> and became the Good News by its free availability to all through the cross of Christ (Rom 3,23-24). From a Pauline perspective, there was no difference between the content of the gospel of Jesus and the content of the grace of God as summarised in Eph 2,8-10. In the Jerusalem Council, the leaders perceived the grace given to Paul, and extended their fellowship, agreeing to the division of labour between Paul and themselves for the extension of the gospel (Gal 2,9). This perception connotes the integrity of Pauline gospel and its authentic interpretation. In Gal 1,15-16 Paul stated that he had been called by the grace of God who was pleased to reveal His Son to preach him (*i.e.*, *gospel*) to the Gentiles. His letter to the Ephesians speaks of the stewardship of God's grace (Eph 3,2), stewardship in this instance meaning 'the grace of God' embodied

10 Once in 1 Cor 16,3 and 10x in 2 Cor 8 and 9.

11 H. D. Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985), 42.

and interpreted by the gospel rather than his own Apostleship as an *Office* (1 Thess 2,6-7). The relationship between the stewardship of God's grace and the gospel is evident in Eph 3,7-8 where he says that his gospel and its proclamation are, in their essence, the grace of God.

In Phil 1,7 *charis*, with the definite article, could refer either to a prior mentioned grace or to a well-known grace. Paul explains the Philippians partaking of grace as being two aspects of a single reality, *viz.*, both in his chains and in the defending and confirming of the gospel.<sup>12</sup> Here also the relation of grace to the gospel is self-evident.<sup>13</sup> In Acts 20,24 Paul recapitulates his evangelisation in his speech to the elders of Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem, as "testifying to the gospel of the grace of God". In his letter to the Galatians Paul wrote that readers were turning away from the grace of Christ to another gospel, but in reality this other gospel was non-existent (Gal 1,6-7). Thus *charis* was the gospel preached by Paul (Gal 1,6-8). Besides being opening formula in Christian liturgy, "the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 13,13), is in fact the real *access* to God. This phrase refers to the redemptive action as set forth in the gospel story with Jesus Christ as the supreme manifestation of the grace of God; grace being almost shorthand for the gospel in Paul. In Rom 1,5 he

12 According to G. D. Fee, a few manuscripts omit the preposition *en* preceding *tē apologia* (cf. A, D\*, F, G, vg<sup>mss</sup>). The lack of the preposition makes it a single three-member phrase, i.e., in my bonds, defence, and confirmation of the gospel. However, they are textual evidence that for Paul it is a single reality with different aspects. Cf. G. D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 74, n.15.

13 At least ten other passages in the Pauline literature find "gospel" and "grace" employed in the same immediate context, strongly implying that the only salvific channel of divine grace is the pure "truth of the gospel" (Gal 2,5,14). In fact, the relationship between "the gospel" and "grace" is so far-reaching and enduring that Paul tells the Church at Corinth that their generosity is related to their "confession of the gospel of Christ" (see NIV 2 Cor 9,13) and is an expression of *the surpassing grace* of God that has been given to them (2 Cor 9,14)

says that he has received grace and apostleship; though these appear as two separate realities, the latter explains the former. Grace is not merely the foundation of Pauline gospel; everything in Paul turns upon *charis*. In Col 1,6 *charis* is the gospel heard and understood by the Colossians. *Charis* is the gospel according to Paul (Rom 1,5; 1 Cor 3,10; 15,10; 2 Cor 12,9; Gal 1,15; 2,9; Eph 3,2.7.8). It is not merely the starting point; it is the central as well as the terminating point of Pauline gospel. Besides being a classic Pauline expression and a fundamental theological concept, *charis* as gospel is a Christian right as well as an obligation (1 Cor 9,15-16). Paul's use of the term *charis* for the collection has to be viewed from this oneness of *charis* with the gospel.

In 2 Cor 8,9 Paul writes: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." Here *charis* directly denotes the utterly undeserved, free, and inexhaustibly effective love of God, active in and through Jesus Christ. In 2 Cor 8,9 *charis* summarises Jesus' whole activity in the salvation economy of God the Father. Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection were the very actualisation of *grace*. By employing the same term for the collection, Paul makes it evident that it is 'all-of-a-piece with Christ's saving act.' Thus, *grace-gospel-collection* are various perspectives of a single reality. The collection was not merely a gathering up of money, but was the consummation of the gospel. The collection as *charis* not only indicated the multilateral reality of the gospel but also dynamically illustrated a life-giving gospel beyond an act of charity. The collection was not only a concrete sharing of the gospel by both (giver and receiver), but it also vindicated its oneness *viz.*, by accepting the collection, the church of Jerusalem accepted the integrity of the gospel preached by Paul among the Gentiles. Any reluctance or refusal in relation to the collection by either giver or receiver would not only have questioned the integrity of the gospel but also the presence of grace, thus rendering Paul's entire evangelisation futile (Gal 2,2). The sincere readiness by the giver and its grateful acceptance by the receiver would demonstrate the unity of a living gospel of grace and guarantee its future viability. As

Jesus of Nazareth was the Word incarnated in time and space (Gal 4,4), so also was the collection the crystallisation of the gospel in the particular context of Pauline preaching. Paul never used the term *money* for the collection, nor did he describe the utter poverty of the beneficiaries to accumulate funds. He based his appeal for collection on the response to the gospel of grace by both, *i.e.*, *in relation to the one who offered and the one who accepted the collection*, thereby actualising the grace of God. As the grace of God was the gospel of Jesus, so also, was Pauline preaching materialised in the collection, and as the gospel was fundamental to Paul's understanding of grace, so was the collection for the poor cardinal to Pauline gospel.

All through life, Paul had to fight for the integrity of his gospel. Similarly, the collection faced innumerable hurdles. However, he abandoned neither, though the latter did not always go smoothly and had serious interruptions. He always began it anew (2 Cor 9,1-5) and carried it out till the end in every sense. The collection for the poor was an overflow of the grace of God (2 Cor 8,2) and an integral part of one's Christian existence. As the gospel was a result of and a response to the grace of God in faith, so too was the collection as *charis* a gracious response to and result of the gospel of Jesus. In Paul, grace determined the content of the gospel while the gospel as *charis* determined the quantity of the collection and *charis*, as the collection, determined the quality of the gospel. Such an interrelationship between *grace-gospel-collection* justifies the Pauline use of the term *charis* for collection with multiple significance including: *charis* as the collection of money for the poor (1 Cor 16,3; 2 Cor 8,6.7.19), *charis* in Jesus Christ *i.e.*, the gospel (2 Cor 8,9), *charis* that takes expression in Christian living (2 Cor 8,1.4; 9,8.14) and *charis* as thanksgiving given to God (2 Cor 8,16; 9,15).

### **3. *Diakonia* (Service = Collection of Money)**

*Diakonia* is another favoured term used by Paul for the collection of money for the poor. Though this noun is used 33 times to denote the activity of *diakonein*, it appears only once in the canonical Gospels (Luke 10,40) but with a non-theological nuance, *viz.*, the activity of serving at table. From the number of its occurrences in the

NT, it is evident that Paul was the one who popularised *diakonia*<sup>14</sup> and propagated it with Christological connotations. Though we do not have much evidence for the use of *diakonia* before the time of Paul, it was not his invention. Its origin surely goes back to the verb, *diakonein*. In the Pauline letters, *diakonia* is inspired from the self-understanding of Jesus as servant of God (Phil 2,7). Paul took the OT concept of the suffering servant, which culminated in Jesus, and applied it to designate his gospel and collection. It is not a coincidence that all 22 occurrences of the verb *diakonein* in the Gospels are reserved directly to Jesus either alone or with his followers, and to words directly spoken by him (Matt 4,11; 8,15; 20,28; 25,44; 27,55; Mark 1,13.31; 10,45; 15,41; Luke 4,39; 8,3; 10,40; 12,37; 17,8; 22,26.27; John 12,2.26). Such specific concentration of *diakonein* on Jesus makes evident that it is a central expression connected with His life and message, describing his entire ministry and the deeper significance of his death for humanity (Matt 26,28). *Diakonia* is better understood in the light of Jesus' ministry (Mark 10,45) and his expiatory death (Rom 3,25). The use of *diakonia* in the Pauline letters has to be seen in the light of Jesus' life. The linkage between Pauline use of *diakonia* with Jesus' own self-understanding and ministry as *diakonein* provides *diakonia* (as collection) Christological substance.

NT *diakonia* is chiefly a Pauline term. Out of a total of 22 occurrences in Pauline corpus, it appears 17x in three undisputed Pauline letters i.e., Romans (Rom 11,13; 12,7; 15,31), 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 12,5; 16,15), and 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 3,7.8.9<sup>2</sup>; 4,1; 5,18; 6,3; 8,4; 9,1.12.13; 11,8). Among these occurrences, only two (Rom 12,7; 1 Cor 12,5)<sup>15</sup> fail to pertain to the preaching of the gospel or the

14 It is found 22x in the Pauline letters. Outside Paul and Luke, it is found once each in the letter to Hebrews and in the Revelation to John. Luke uses it 8x in his second volume. Cf. R. Morgensthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zürich: Gotthelf-Verlag, 1992), 87.

15 In Rom 12,7 Paul urges the Roman Christians to exercise the gift of service they have for others (cf. *en tē diakonia*). It is already said that the Pauline understanding of service in its content and colour is Jesus' own description of service (Mark 10,45 and pars.). In 1 Cor 12,5 Paul says to the Corinthians that though there are varieties in the service,

collection of money. In 1 Cor 16,15 Paul reminds the Corinthians about *diakonia* rendered by the household of Stephanas to the saints. While there are scholars who think that *diakonia* in 1 Cor 16,15 has nothing to do with financial assistance to the poor,<sup>16</sup> I see no reason for such total exclusion. It is true that Paul uses *diakonia* many times in order to distinguish his gospel preaching (2 Cor 3,7-9; 4,1) and even calls his co-workers as *diakonoi* (2 Cor 3,5). However, is it not possible that *diakonia* in 1 Cor 16,15 is a comprehensive term including aspects of financial help for the poor, apart from preaching the gospel? Being one of the prominent households in Achaia, it is illogical to conclude that such well-to-do household as that of Stephanas closed its eyes to the needs of the poor. The phrase *eis diakonian tois haiois* (=to the service of the saints, cf. 1 Cor 16,15) is identical in content with *tēs diakonias tēs eis tous hagious* (=the relief of the saints) used in relation to the collection in 2 Cor 8,4 and 9,1. Together with J. Ruef<sup>17</sup> I consider that *diakonia* in 1 Cor 16,15 at least has a derived connotation of collection for the poor, besides its common connotation with preaching activity. Such a view complements both Jesus' own perspective of service and that of Paul.

In 2 Corinthians alone *diakonia* is used 12x. All references, except those in chapters 8 and 9, refer directly to preaching activity (2 Cor 3,7.8.9<sup>2</sup>; 4,1; 5,18; 6,3; 11,8). Paul's self-understanding as a gospel preacher was intimately related to his understanding of *diakonia* (Acts 20,24; 21,19; 2 Cor 11,7-8) as designated by the life of Jesus. From such an understanding derives Paul's claim to be a first rate gospel preacher, in no way inferior to the other apostles (2 Cor 11,5.23;

there is only one Lord. *Kurios* is a typical Pauline term for the risen Christ. G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 587.

<sup>16</sup> G. D. Fee says that 1 Cor 16,15 has nothing to do with the collection of money for the poor. His argument is that the verb is aorist in aspect, and the content of v.16 and the context of the paragraph as a whole are against it. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 829, n.23.

<sup>17</sup> J. Ruef, *Paul's First Letter to Corinth* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Pelican Commentaries, 1971), 186.

2 Cor 12,11).<sup>18</sup> All references to the noun *diakonia* (2 Cor 8,4; 9,1; 12,13) and the verb *diakonein* (2 Cor 8,19.20) in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> chapters of 2 Corinthians are related to the collection. Here it is an outward expression of gospel content. Through the medium of money, the unity and intimacy of one gospel becomes living and meaningful. In 2 Cor 9,12 *diakonia* refers to the collection of money by the Corinthians rather than its administration by Paul. In 2 Cor 9,13 Paul states that through the *test* of *diakonia* participants not only acknowledge the gospel of Christ but it also helps to ensure that they never miss the orientation (2 Cor 9,13b; Gal 1,6-7; 2 Cor 11,3-4). In its absence, faith in the gospel could become questionable or lose its orientation.

*Diakonia* as collection enriched by Jesus' self-understanding as a servant, not only become an applied gospel, but also helped the gospel to cross national boundaries. As one cannot make a watertight distinction between Jesus' healing the sick and his preaching the gospel, so also is the Pauline concept of *diakonia*, integral and inseparable. In the last reference to *diakonia* in the undisputed Pauline letters is in Romans 15,31, Paul asserts that the collection is not merely a *diakonia*; it is "his" *diakonia*. Such Pauline understanding is supported by the use of *diakonôn* (*the first person, active, nominative, masculine, singular, present participle*) modifying the verb *poreuomai* (*the first person singular, present middle indicative*) in Rom 15,25 where Paul says that he is going to Jerusalem with the aid for the saints.<sup>19</sup> The collection of money for the poor contributed by various churches was not only their contribution, it was also Paul's *diakonia*, viz., "his" supreme service (Rom 15,31). That is why he never abandoned it, despite difficulties and criticisms

18 It is probable that such an understanding of the interrelation between *euaggelion* and *diakonia* might have prompted Paul to develop a unique missionary method of combining the activity of gospel preaching and an occupation involving manual work in order to finance the missionary expenses (cf. 1 Cor 9,1-19; 2 Cor 11,7-15; 12,13-16).

19 The literal translation of Rom 15,25 could be: "I am travelling to Jerusalem with my service for the saints."

in relation to collection, especially in Corinth.<sup>20</sup> The importance of it in his evangelisation becomes clear from his journey to Jerusalem, where he had sensed serious threat to his life (Acts 20,22). Initially he thought of delegating someone to carry it for him (1 Cor 16,3), but later in his letter to the Romans, it is clear that he had no intention of doing this; instead he asked the Roman community to pray that he might carry out “his” *diakonia* (Rom 15,31).

#### **4. *Koinônia* (Fellowship = Collection of Money)**

There is no evidence that the term *koinônia* was ever used before Paul with *consistent specific* theological content. Even though *koinônia* appears nineteen times in the Greek NT, it is totally absent from the canonical Gospels! All thirteen occurrences of this term in the Pauline literature are in the undisputed Pauline Corpus<sup>21</sup> where the context is both anthropological and theological in content. It not only demonstrates a human fellowship but also a relationship between God and man, totally absent in the LXX.<sup>22</sup> In both God-man and man to man relationships, Christ’s centrality is Paul’s focusing point. Such Pauline uniqueness in relation to *koinônia* is supported by the fact that Paul never used it to refer to individual participation in Christ.

From both perspectives, *viz.*, the number of occurrences and content, the term *koinônia* is Pauline.<sup>23</sup> In the process of describing Christian existence Paul tells the Corinthians that their Christian

20 Paul boasted of a “free gospel” (1 Cor 9,18). It is possible that the Corinthians interpreted the collection as a “price tag” attached to the “free gospel” in a cunning way (cf. 2 Cor 12,17).

21 Rom 15,26; 1 Cor 1,9; 10,16<sup>2</sup>; 2 Cor 6,14; 8,4; 9,13; 13,14 (13); Gal 2,9; Phil 1,5; 2,1; 3,10; Phlm v. 6.

22 F. Hauck, “*Koinwni , a,*” in *TDNT*, vol. 3, 801

23 All non-Pauline occurrences of *koinônia* in the NT correspond to either general usage in Greek literature or appear to have been influenced by Pauline usage. Lukian usage of *koinônia* in Acts 2,42 is well recognised as a carefully constructed Lukian summary of the way of life of early Christianity. By the time Luke wrote his second volume, Pauline theological concepts such as *koinônia* were very common in Luke’s circle.

vocation is a call by God the Father to the *koinônia* of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1,9), God being the agent of the Christian call. The purpose of this call is to be in communion (*koinônia*) with His Son. In the Pauline *koinônia* a ‘right’ breaking of the bread, does not bring together different pieces of bread but begets one body. A wrong breaking could bring about defects in the body of Christ leading to its disintegration (1 Cor 11,30). Therefore Paul gave strict warnings to the elite of Corinth not to continue with the “non-Christian breaking” by creating social divisions as they gathered to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.<sup>24</sup> According to Paul, *koinônia* is multi-dimensional actualisation of the relationship between *believers - Jesus Christ - and the believers themselves* demonstrated in various aspects such as the ecclesial body, the Eucharistic body, the eschatological body etc. *Koinônia* is concretely visible when the believers stand firm in *one* spirit, with one mind striving side by side for *the gospel* (Phil 1,27). The oneness of the body that a diverse group of individuals (1 Cor 1,9-17) acquire in right *koinônia* is further confirmed by 1 Cor 12,12-13.

2 Cor 13,13 and Phil 2,1<sup>25</sup> are the only two instances in the NT where *koinônia* is used with *pneumatos* (spirit).<sup>26</sup> Besides this, Paul is the only NT author to conclude a literary composition with the threefold Trinitarian formula, *i.e.*, Jesus Christ’s grace, God’s love,

- 24 Paul goes on to say that if Corinthians continue to maintain the social and economic distinctions ecclesial body, they do not have *koinônia* in the eucharistic body of Christ (1 Cor 11,17-22).
- 25 The other usages of *koinônia* in Paul, *i.e.*, in Rom 15,26; 2 Cor 8,4; 9,13 are in the context of the collection and in Gal 2,9 and Phil 1,5 they are in relation to the gospel proclamation and are dealt below.
- 26 According to Thornton, both 2 Cor 13,13 and Phil 2,1 are parallel in content. *Koinônia pneumatos* means the fellowship imparted by the Holy Spirit or simply participation in the Holy Spirit. Cf. L. S. Thornton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ* (London: Dacre Press, 1942), 71, 69. The immediate context of 2 Cor 13,13 and Phil 2,1 does not provide a clear explanation or clue to specify the exact meaning of *koinônia pneumatos*.

and the Holy Spirit's fellowship. There is no reason to assume that Luke would have disagreed, had he known, that his use of *koinônia* in Acts 2,42 was in essence the same as in 2 Cor 13,13 and Phil 2,1. Both 2 Cor 13,13 and Phil 2,1 have the same order *i.e.*, Christ's grace (encouragement)<sup>27</sup>- God's love – the Spirit's fellowship. In this order, the grace of Christ appears to be first. In reality, this is not so. God's love is first (1 John 4,8). However, from human point of view, it is not the love of God that is first in its immediacy; it is the grace of Christ that is experienced first. Only when the love of God took flesh in Jesus, manifest through his gospel, did humanity come to the ultimate and definitive experience of God's love as well as the fellowship of the Spirit. Only after the apostles had experienced his death and resurrection, did they begin to realise God's love and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in a realistic way.

The Philippians were Paul's closest unwavering partners in his evangelisation and remained constant with his understanding of the gospel and *koinônia* (Phil 1,7; 4,15). Fearing the invasion of a perverted gospel (Phil 3,1-2), Paul briefed them on the quintessence of their Christian existence (Phil 3,10). He categorically stated that it was not the external sign of circumcision that was important; instead it is the internal being *in Christ* (Phil 3,9). Being *in Christ* is having *koinônia* thus sharing in the power of resurrection. The fulcrum of *koinônia* is Christ and the gospel of his expiatory death. Paul's gospel, in super brevity, is *cruciform* (1 Cor 2,1-2; Phil 3,10). Lukan evidence supports such Pauline understanding when Luke reports that Paul and Barnabas encouraged the believers in Asia Minor, saying that they 'must go through many tribulations'<sup>28</sup> to enter the kingdom

27 *Paramythion* in Phil 2,1 is translated in the RSV as *encouragement*. It is a flattened translation and does not bring out the original meaning of the text. The term *paramythion* used in between *paraklēsis* and *koinônia* in Phil 2,1 refers not merely to comfort or encouragement but to love's power to stir one into action. C. Spicq, "Paramu, qeomai," in *TLNT*, vol.2, 34, n.19.

28 "Going through many tribulations" denotes the participation in the suffering of Christ.

of God' (Acts 14,21-22). Thus *koinônia* is not only Christ-oriented and *cruciform* in content (Phil 3,10), it is oriented to the gospel in every dimension. The cruciform *koinônia* has to be visibly expressed by vertical and horizontal relations.

In Phlm v.5 Paul sums up Philemon's Christian life style in relation to the Lord Jesus and all the saints (believers) in his household, *i.e.*, the life of faith and love. His sharing of faith (*he koinônia tês pisteôs sou*) becomes *energêς*, that heightens the good (*news*) believers share being in Christ (Phlm v.6). Emphasis is placed on Philemon's active faith sharing and being a living testimony. In Gal 5,6 Paul condenses the *being-ness* of a Christian as faith working through love.<sup>29</sup> When faith is operative (active) through particular actions of love, only then believers become living Christians; otherwise they remain passive. A passive *koinônia tês pisteôs* would ever be *energêς* and, in the course of time, Christian existence would stagnate. The collection given by the Macedonian churches was not solely economical assistance, but was in core a generously overflowing *koinônia* from their faith-life (lived gospel) despite their utter poverty (2 Cor 8,1-4). The citation of their lived-gospel example has a definite purpose: to ensure the rich Corinthians would excel in the same way in faith and love (2 Cor 8,7ab) inspired by their impoverished counterparts. The collection as *koinônia* was a clear manifestation of active faith and love (2 Cor 8,7c), money being a medium of Christological content. The money is *transformed* due to *koinônia* 'in Christ' into a Christological *substratum*. For the Macedonians, the collection (*koinônia*) illustrated real participation in the sufferings of their brothers in faith' without ever having an opportunity to encounter them. It was a real participation in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It was also symbolic of the unity and intimacy of their faith in *one gospel*.<sup>30</sup> *Koinônia* was in reality a genuine test of

29 Here faith and love are not two separate realities. In the concrete, they are non-separable and the present middle participle *energoumenê* refers to their continuous nature.

30 In 2 Cor 8,4 Paul uses three terms in a consecutive series denoting the collection: *charis*, *koinônia*, *diakonia*. We have already discussed in detail *charis* and *diakonia* and their relation to the gospel and collection.

faith in the gospel of Jesus going beyond mere words (2 Cor 9,13). *Koinônia* is also a geographical extension of the gospel. In Gal 2,9 Paul, describing the Jerusalem Council, wrote to the Galatians that the leaders of the Jerusalem church extended the right hand<sup>31</sup> of *koinônia*, so that he and Barnabas might continue their evangelisation among Gentiles, as they among Jews. It is through *koinônia*, as collection, that the Philippians became Paul's partners in his evangelisation (Phil 1,5; 1,7; 4,15). The history of the Philippians' partnership with Pauline gospel (*ekoinônêsen eis logon*<sup>32</sup>) went back to the very days of their Christian existence. That it continued without break until the writing of the letter to the Philippians is evident from Phil 4,15-16.<sup>33</sup> Paul declined monetary help solely for his personal maintenance from anybody.<sup>34</sup> *Koinônia* was not something that Paul demanded<sup>35</sup> from the Philippians but a spontaneous self-giving generated by the gospel preached by him (Phil 4,14ff.; 2 Cor 8,1-5).

31 From Latin *manum dare* (give hand) derives the English term *mandate*. The Council of Jerusalem authoritatively mandated Paul and Barnabas for evangelisation among the Gentiles (Gal 2,9). Before that the leaders perceived the *charis* being operative in Paul (Gal 2,9a) and the genuine power of his gospel (Gal 2,8). Therefore they authoritatively commissioned them to continue. Paul had in fact already begun it, independently of them (Gal 1,18). In the initial stage of his evangelisation, he did not even think of consulting the Jerusalem leaders (Gal 1,17). However, he was very eager to maintain the unity of the one gospel (Gal 2,2, cf. 1 Cor 15,11; Gal 1,8).

32 *Logos* is a synonym for the gospel in Paul (cf. Phil 1,12-14 1 Thess 1,6); so also “the word of God” (cf. 2 Cor 2,17; 4,2; 1 Thess 2,13).

33 It may be noted that the single use of the verb *koinôneô* in relation to the collection of money is in Phil 4,15.

34 Paul is the first Christian missionary in early Christianity, according to the available evidence, who initially developed a unique method of missionary maintenance by integrating manual labour and preaching activity.

35 Paul had known the Philippians personally. They were probably economically poor and he would have never demanded financial help from them. Assisting Paul financially was an original idea from the

On the eve of his journey to Jerusalem with the collection, Paul remarked that Macedonia and Achaia had been pleased to make some *koinônia* for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem (Rom 15,26). It was in fact a demonstration of the Christ-event in their personal and communitarian faith life, which Paul cited as an example to another community.<sup>36</sup> The similarity of *koinônia* in Rom 15,26 and 2 Cor 9,13 is very evident and such a construction is unique to the NT. In 2 Cor 9,13 *koinônia* as the collection was a test of the authenticity of their faith in the gospel and in Rom 15,26, Paul said they had successfully passed the test. Paul's intention was to gather fruit (Rom 1,13) in relation to the gospel from the Roman church. In Rom 15,26 *koinônia* is modified by an indefinite pronoun *tis* in relation to an infinitive *poiēsasthai*. Such construction creates a singular linguistic effect and also the effect of "faith communicativeness". Through *koinônia*, (collection), abstract faith becomes concrete, dynamic, and effective.<sup>37</sup> *Faith communicativeness* is a spontaneous result (*eudokēsan*) of being *pneumatikos* (Rom 15,27), showing that Christian existence is in being and sharing one gospel. The Christian call into *koinônia* of the Son (1 Cor 1,9) is *communicatively* solidified in the collection of money, becoming a vehicle of the gospel (Gal 2,9) that crosses national barriers (Rom 15,28-29).<sup>38</sup> The motif *koinônia* as the collection of money for the poor is essentially centred on the gospel.

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Philippians themselves, as a result of their self-giving to the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 8,1-5; Phil 4,17), i.e., the acceptance of the gospel preached by Paul.

- 36 In relation to Corinthians, such methodology is already noted (cf. 2 Cor 8,1-5; 9,1-5). Again in Rom 15,26 Paul stimulates the community in Rome with the lived *koinônia* of the Macedonians and the Achaeans.
- 37 In the first centuries after Christ, the wide and penetrating spread of Christianity was due more to its power of *faith communicativeness*. It emanated from the gospel of the cross rather than from intellectual or physical forces.
- 38 In Rom 15,28-29 Paul says that after having handed over "his collection" to Jerusalem, he would come to Rome and from there go to Spain with the fullness of the blessing of Christ. *Euvlogi*, a j *Cristou*/ is the widely accepted shorter reading.

## 5. *Leitourgia* (Offering = Collection of Money)

In the ancient Greek democracy voluntary *leitourgia*, i.e., discharge of specific services to the community was common. Later it included various compulsory services, not merely political or social but private services by slaves to their masters in every conceivable way. In the Hellenistic period, *leitourgia* came to adopt a technical sense specific to the cultic sphere. Subsequently, by means of LXX and the letter to the Hebrews, it entered Christianity, but in a different sense, becoming a technical term to denote the celebration of Christian faith in everyday life. Though the usage of *leitourgia* in the letter to the Hebrews played a significant role in relation to the later Christian liturgy, available written evidence in the NT clearly shows that this was not the first in Christianity. However, it was in Pauline usage, at least in his writings. Besides being the first to use it among NT authors, Paul also surpassed the author of the Hebrew letters in the number of occurrences.<sup>39</sup> In Paul, there are a total of seven occurrences of the word *leitourg-* group i.e., *leitourgein*, (Rom 15,27) *leitourgia*, (2 Cor 9,12; Phil 2,17.30) *leitourgos* (Rom 13,6; 15,16; Phil 2,25), all being in the undisputed Pauline corpus. In Rom 13,6 *leitourgoi* refers neither to a political and social service as in ancient Greek democracy, nor to a technical term for priestly *cultus* as in LXX. Here *leitourgoi* were not the priests but the secular rulers, to whom Paul rendered the title of servants of God (Rom 13,4). It is noteworthy that it was not their action that received a sacral ring; instead, the action of the Christian believers, i.e., giving tax, received a theological dimension. Relating *diakonos* in Rom 13,4 and *leitourgoi* in Rom 13,6 with the genitive *theou*<sup>40</sup> Paul bridged a religious gap between the paying of tax and the secular authorities (*leitourgoi* in Rom 13,6) thus rendering of tax to the state by believers a religious obligation (Rom 13,6).<sup>41</sup>

39 There are only 6 occurrences of the word *leitoug-rg-* group in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1,7.14; 8,2.6; 9,21; 10,11).

40 According to A. Strobel, the Pauline usage of *leitourgoi theou* in Rom 13,6 is not a reference to a sacral function of the officeholders. Cf. A. Strobel, "Zum Verständnis von Rm 13," ZNW 47 (1956): 86-87.

41 The theological interpretation of the payment of tax by Paul was most

In the final section of the letter to the Romans, Paul called himself *leitourgos* in the context of summing up the geographical extension of his evangelisation activities (Rom 15,14-21). In Rom 15,16 Paul explained precisely that he was a *leitourgos* of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles in the service of the gospel of God. This function is the offering of the Gentiles. In the context of chapter 15, a primary sense of the offering of the Gentiles does not seem to be in the sense of offering made by the Gentiles; instead, the Gentiles themselves were the offering (objective genitive).<sup>42</sup> Such an interpretation goes well with the overall context of Rom 15,14-21, where Paul recapitulated his evangelisation in the various Roman provinces. Again it need not be exclusively an objective genitive; but could carry the nuance of subjective genitive, *i.e.* the offering (collection) made by the Gentiles as a gift of their gratitude to their mother in the gospel, *i.e.*, Jerusalem from where the gospel originated (Rom 15,19; 26-27). Paul as a *leitourgos* carried the offering made by the Gentiles to Jerusalem (Rom 15,25.27). The use of the verb *leitourgēsai* in Rom 15,27 complements linguistically<sup>43</sup> and concretely<sup>44</sup> the offering of the Gentiles as an objective genitive (*i.e.*, the collection). Through the collection, the Gentile churches could not only participate in the sacred service of Paul (Rom 15,31) symbolically but also in a realistic and incarnated (*sarkikois*) manner. Though Paul continues the cultic sense in relation to *leitourgia* in Rom 15,27, it was directly linked to the collection of money, a *materialised* expression of gratitude both from and for the gospel in relation to Jerusalem. By providing a religious or spiritual dimension to the collection, Paul clearly elevated monetary value to the level of a lived-gospel or liturgical worship

probably influenced by the famous teaching of Jesus: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12,17 and pars.).

- 42 H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 1956, Revised by G. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), §§ 1330-31.
- 43 In the grammatical structure of the sentence, ‘the verb’ constitutes the main element of the predicate, expressing action.
- 44 Rom 15,27 uses *sarkikois leitourgēsai*. In other words, the action of *leitourgēsai* has taken flesh.

rather than ensuring it as merely a means of alleviating poverty. Such a connotation of lived liturgy is further added by the use of the verb *opheilô* (=must) in Rom 15,27.

## 6. *Prothymia* (Readiness = Collection of Money)

*Prothymia* is used five times in the NT (Acts 17,11; 2 Cor 8,11.12.19; 2 Cor 9,2). The only Lukan occurrence qualifies the way the Jews in Beroea received the gospel (the Word). All four Pauline uses are confined to one section (2 Cor 8 and 9) which was meant to persuade the Corinthians to make a collection for the poor. From the four, three (2 Cor 8,11.12; 9,2) are used to denote the attitude Paul expected from the Corinthians in realising the collection. In 2 Cor 8,11 Paul said the readiness had to be materialised in proportion to what they had. Paul had to handle this delicate task in the right manner. He knew that the collection should not be forced from the Corinthians (2 Cor 8,8) but they had to be persuaded to have *prothymia*, so that the Word that he preached among them might be incarnated in a realistic way. In 2 Cor 8,9 he exhorted them to follow the example of Jesus who emptied himself for their sake though in 8,10 Paul emphasised that it was mere advice and not a command (vv.11-12). Paul wanted every believer in the gospel to have *prothymia*. However, he did not expect all to match this with a fixed amount lest it should be a burden (2 Cor 8,13). He wanted the *prothymia* to be matched with what each one had (2 Cor 8,12). In 2 Cor 9,2 Paul alluded to the fact that he had used the example of the Corinthians' *prothymia* to motivate the Macedonians a year earlier, an action very similar to the purpose shown in 2 Cor 8 and 9. Instead of requesting two or three rich members in the Corinthian community to contribute generously, Paul tried, in a very persuasive way, to appeal to every believer, asking them to symbolise their faith in the incarnate Word of God (2 Cor 8,9). The success of the Corinthian *prothymia* (eagerness) as a reflection of the gospel not only radiated the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 8,9.19) but also Paul's own *prothymia* (2 Cor 8,19). This understanding is in tune with what Paul said: 'I did not run in vain or labour in vain' and *leitourgia* in Phil 2,16-17. Thus, the Corinthian *prothymia* became Paul's *prothymia* similar to "his gospel" and "his service".

## 7. *Haplotēs* (Generosity = Collection of Money)

Paul is the only NT writer to use the substantive *haplotēs*, eight times. R. Morgenthaler, however, counts only seven<sup>45</sup> and this is supported by W. F. Moulton who cites only seven texts (Rom 12,8; 2 Cor 8,2; 9,11.13; 11,3; Eph 6,5; Col 3,2) in his concordance.<sup>46</sup> *Haplotēs* in 2 Cor 1,12 could be a confusion by an uncial hand. It could be either APLOTHTI (simplicity) or AGIOTHTI (holiness).<sup>47</sup> The RSV translators prefer AGIOTHTI (holiness). Out of the seven non-controversial textual occurrences in Pauline literature, five are in two undisputed letters, *i.e.*, Romans and 2 Corinthians. Among these five, three (2 Cor 8,2; 9,11.13) refer directly to the context of collection for the poor. In Rom 12,8 Paul exhorts the one who shares [material goods], *i.e.*, *ho metadidous*, to do it *en haplotēti* (in liberality). This means sharing should be a result of a free will overflowing from a generous heart and must never be forced. Such a spontaneous overflow of material sharing reflects total singleness or an unreserved heart, thus becoming a reflection of the incarnation of the Word of God (*the gospel*) in one's life. In 2 Cor 11,3 by *haplotēs . . . tēs eis ton Christon* Paul meant the integrity (singleness) of the Corinthians towards Christ and warned them against duplicity in relation to the gospel, evident from v. 4 which follows. In 2 Cor 8,2 Paul says that the generous financial contribution of the Macedonian churches was a result of their giving first to the Lord (2 Cor 8,5). Their *haplotēs* in relation to the collection was the result of single-mindedness in giving their heart to Christ. The abundance of Macedonian joy in giving, despite their poverty, proved that, in sharing, they harboured no other ulterior motive (2 Cor 8,2) and that their act was the spontaneous result of the gospel they received. Phil 4,10-20 and 1 Thess 4,9ff also support such an interpretation, and it is evident from the context in 2 Cor 9,11.13 that by *haplotēs* Paul meant a generous financial contribution; material sharing carried out through the apostles for their unseen brothers in the faith resulted in thanksgiving to God.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Morgenthaler, *Statistik*, 76.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Moulton and Geden, “*Aplo, thj,*” *CGT*, 88.

<sup>47</sup> Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 507.

The relation of such a generous contribution (*haplotê̄s*) to the gospel is again supported by 2 Cor 9,13. Corinthian generosity would have been a sign of their sharing in *one gospel*, and also their unity in and intimacy with Christ (2 Cor 9,13). In summary, the motive and the amount of *haplotê̄s* (as generosity or financial contribution) not only rested entirely in relation to the gospel but also with its translation into real life.

### **8. *Agapê* (Love = Collection of Money)**

Though the Greeks had four terms to express the major senses of love –*storgê*, *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*, the first two lack any mention in the NT, with *philia* being used only once, in James, in the context of stating that the love of the world is enmity with God (James 4,4). The NT propagated the word *agapê* widely and every single book in the NT includes one form of the word: *agape*, *agapaō*, or *agapê̄tos*.<sup>48</sup> Around three-quarters of total occurrences of the noun *agapê* in the NT are in Pauline letters though these constitute only about one-quarter of the NT. Out of a total of 75 occurrences in the Pauline letters, three-quarters are in the undisputed Pauline corpus alone.<sup>49</sup> Such Pauline predominance is striking against the background of the total absence of this noun in Mark’s Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles or James’ letter. The single occurrences in Matthew and Luke are from Jesus’ mouth (Matt 24,12; Luke 11,42). Though *agapê* is translated in the NT as “love”, it would almost always be necessary to translate it as “demonstration of love”<sup>50</sup> (John 13,35; likewise 15,13; 1 John 3,16).

In Pauline understanding, *agapê* has its starting point in God (Rom 5,8; 8,37; 9,13; 2 Cor 9,7; 13,11.13), its definite demonstration in Christ crucified and its powerful presence in the believers through

48 There are a total of 320 occurrences of these terms in the NT. Cf. G. Schneider, “Aga , ph,” in *EDNT*, vol. 1, 9.

49 There are a total of 116 occurrences of the term *avga , ph* in NT and the undisputed Pauline corpus has 45 occurrences (Rom – 9x; 1 Cor – 14x; 2 Cor – 9x; Gal – 3x; Phil – 4x; 1 Thess – 5x; Phlm – 1x). Cf. Morgenthaler, *Statistik*, 67.

50 Spicq, “VAg , ph,” 12.

*koinônia* of the Holy Spirit (Rom 5,5; 2 Cor 13,13). Paul, the theologian, went to the extent of stating that only love remains; and among faith, hope and love, the greatest is love (1 Cor 13). In understanding the use of *agapê* in relation to the collection, one has to keep in mind Paul's perspective on love, used on three occasions to denote financial contribution, all instances being found in the same chapter, *i.e.*, 2 Cor 8,7.8.24. In 2 Cor 8,7 he exhorted the Corinthians to excel in their financial contribution to the poor as they excelled in the various dimensions of Christian life such as faith, word, knowledge, earnestness, and in their love (*agapê*) for him. Here is a visible relationship between the Corinthians' love for Paul and the collection. Paul noted love is real only when it goes beyond mere desire, demonstrated by action. The Corinthians financial contribution would be a tangible proof of their mature and solid love (2 Cor 8,8). Paul's first letter had already informed them that the very essence of Christian life was love (1 Cor 13,1-2; v. 2b). Genuine love demanded authentic and real sharing and vice versa. Christian life finds its continuous expression in *agapê*. In 1 Cor 16,1-4 Paul appears to have used commanding language in relation to the collection. In 2 Cor 8,7 the collection as *agapê* was not a command, however, *hina* clause in 2 Cor 8,7 in relation to the collection was an exhortation with the sense of an imperative.<sup>51</sup> In 2 Cor 8,8 Paul clearly stated it was not a command, but was to be demonstrated in the form of financial contribution, ultimately based on the incarnation of the Lord himself (2 Cor 8,9). The love of Christ was the controlling force behind the collection (2 Cor 5,14). In 2 Cor 8,24 Paul said that *agapê* applied to the collection provided overwhelming proof, and was the hallmark of the Corinthians incarnated and creative love of Christ. *Agapê* (collection) was not only a creative means by which the gospel was transformed (1 Cor 8,1) into a healthily digested Christian spirituality, but also evoked a contextually translated and geographically-extended gospel.

## 9. *Eulogia* (Gift = Collection of Money)

The total absence of the noun, *eulogia* in the canonical Gospels is

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51 M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*, 1963 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994), § 415.

impressive considering the fact that all of them have the verb, *eulogein*. Out of the sixteen occurrences of this term in the NT, it appears nine times in the Pauline letters. Out of these nine Pauline occurrences, eight are in the undisputed Pauline corpus (Rom 15,29; 16,18; 1 Cor 10,16; 2 Cor 9,5<sup>2</sup>.6<sup>2</sup>; Gal 3,14). Of these, five relate to the collection, i.e., Rom 15,29; 2 Cor 9,5<sup>2</sup>.6.<sup>2</sup> In Rom 16,18 *eulogia* is one of the means by which false propagators of a perverted gospel (Rom 16,17-18) could seduce the hearts of Roman Christians.<sup>52</sup> In Gal 3,14 by the expression *he eulogia tou Abraam* (the blessing of Abraham) Paul appears to employ the very language of the false teachers in Galatia. In the Galatians' context, the teachers of a law-based gospel might have insisted that, in order to share in the blessing of Abraham, one first had to be a law-observant Jew such as Abraham. Using the very category of false teachers, Paul re-interpreted the blessing of Abraham from the perspective of the gospel of the Cross. In 2 Cor 9,5-6 Paul used the noun, *eulogia* four times in relation to a gift or financial contribution. It was necessary to motivate the Corinthians to take part in the collection, so it was important to emphasise that financial contribution should never be forced (*pleonexia*) but should be from a free will and a grateful heart without any type of pressure, either internal or external. Such free-willed contribution was seen as a multilateral blessing (*eulogia*) both on the part of the giver and the receiver. Paul not only used the familiar agricultural metaphor of sowing and reaping but also employed a play on words using the phrase i.e., *epi eulogiais epi eulogiais*, in order to emphasise the generous nature of the Corinthians' gift. *Blessing* as concrete *sharing* became in reality an incarnated gospel of Jesus itself. Paul's primary attention was not on the amount of money raised, but on the manner of collection, i.e., it had to be *eulogia* in every sense. Financial contribution was an integral part of the fullness of blessing. The origin of the gospel was Jerusalem, so the financial contributions brought there were an actualisation of the

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52 Here it has a secular Greek connotation, i.e., *eu + logein*, fine speaking with a negative sense. RSV translates it as "flattering." In no sense, does it have any relation to the collection of money for the poor.

gospel in the life of the Gentiles. Thus the collection in its every perspective, i.e., in relation to the gospel, the Gentile churches, the Jerusalem church, and even for Paul himself, was blessing of Christ (*eulogia Christou*) cf. Rom 15,29 and 1 Cor 9,23.

### **10. *Karpos* (Fruit = Collection of Money)**

This term is frequently used in the Gospels. However undisputed Pauline corpus has only nine occurrences (Rom 1,13; 6,21; 6,22; 15,28; 1 Cor 9,7; Gal 5,22; Phil 1,11.22; 4,17), used in various ways. In Rom 1,13 and Phil 1,22 *karpos* means the fruit of Paul's missionary activity. In Rom 6,21.22 *karpos* refers to the positive and negative results a person has when he is influenced by sanctification or sin respectively. In Gal 5,22 "*karpos* of the Spirit" refers to a catalogue of virtues as a result of life in the Spirit. *Karpos* in Phil 1,11 is concerned with the righteous behaviour of the Philippians, while in 1 Cor 9,7 it refers to the right of an apostle to be financially supported by the community. Only in Phil 4,17 and Rom 15,28 is *karpos* linked to a gift or financial contribution for the poor. In Phil 4,17, Paul was not seeking something from the Philippians for his personal or physical sustenance (Phil 4,12). Instead, he desired to see a maturation of the gospel in their life. The verb *epizētō* could denote a sense of demand or remuneration for Paul's evangelisation in Philippi, but such a meaning is out of context, which makes it evident that it is not a forced gift but a fragrant and pleasing one (Phil 4,18) derived from an actualisation of the gospel in Philippians' life. In Rom 15,28 Paul said that the material contribution from the Gentile churches to Jerusalem was the sealing of the fruit for Jerusalem. In this context sealing (*sphragizein*) means to bring to a close. Thus, the collection carried a sense of the actualisation of the gospel (fruit) in the eastern Roman provinces (Rom 15,19). It could also have been part of the Pauline evangelisation strategy to provide evidence for the unity of one gospel. A negative response on the part of Jerusalem could have incurred a negative response to his life-long struggle to extend a unified gospel (Rom 15,31). As the apostle to the nations (Rom 11,13), Paul himself was the right person to bring the collection as a sealing of this gospel fruit. In this sense, it is also Paul's personal service to the gospel (Rom 15,31).

## Conclusion

Ten Pauline expressions referring to collection for the poor have been analysed.<sup>53</sup> Although *logia* was a secular technical term of that time for taxes and voluntary contributions, it acquired a sacred tone in the Pauline coupling of it with the first day of the week and faith in the risen Jesus, summing up Christian obedience (faith) to (in) the gospel of Jesus. The use of the term *charis* (grace) in connection with fundraising makes evident that the commencement, continuation, and culmination of collecting were in fact different phases of the *gospel of grace*. *Diakonia* (service) in relation to the collection reveals that the money Paul carried to Jerusalem, accompanied by a large group of benefactors representing various churches, contained more than monetary value. In Paul's *diakonia* the collection of money for the poor reached the level of Jesus' gospel, which was '*his*' (Paul's) gospel, *viz.*, the collection of money for the poor had become theologically '*his*' (Paul's) *diakonia*, though it was not literally drawn from his purse.

The motif of *koinônia* (fellowship) in the context of collecting money for the poor evinces a theological convergence of the gospel of Christ in bearing witness to faith as material sharing. *Koinônia* was also a reality Paul used for the mediation of the gospel through various socio-cultural barriers to become a *universal* gospel in the Roman provinces. By linking *leitourgia* (offering) with financial contribution for the poor, Paul contributed to a genuine Christian liturgy, evading lip service for a total *gospel commitment*. Paul demonstrated how the Corinthian *prothymia* (readiness) became the apostolic *prothymia* just like the aforementioned reference to '*his service*' and '*his gospel*'. For Paul, the Corinthian *haplotês* (generosity) in relation to the financial assistance for the poor, was an unmistakable sign of their sharing in one gospel, cementing their unity *in* and intimacy *with* Christ. Fundraising as *agape* (love) was not only a shared

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53 There are few more combinations of phrases and *hapaxlegomena* in relation to collection. However, the written NT evidences are insufficient for their appraisal in depth.

*living gospel* but also the contextually-translated and geographically-extended Good News. In every respect, and in relation to every participant in it, including the Gentile churches, the Jerusalem church and even Paul himself, mobilising of money for the poor was in fact the blessing (*eulogia*) of Christ. The realised collection, as *karpos* (fruit) was a sealing of the gospel fruit stretching from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire to the gospel's originating place, *i.e.*, Jerusalem, before its extension West (Rom 15,28).

Paul never used economic language to raise the maximum amount of money in a short span of time. Instead, he selected only theological terms rich in *gospel evocation* that could fecundate an *evangelical* life in both parties: *the givers as well as the receivers*. The appraisal of various terms from different perspectives converges with the observation that the collection was a multifaceted reality concerned primarily with the progress of the gospel in every dimension. In every phase of the collection, *i.e.*, conceptualisation, execution, delivery, and especially in the expected response of the recipient (the church of Jerusalem), Paul's principal concern was the *integrity* of the gospel. Collection for the poor and *gospel living* were not two separate and unrelated realities. Both became effective and complete through their intimate and integral relatedness. On the one hand, Jerusalem was where the gospel of Jesus originated, whilst being the destination of the collection, a *rounded out gospel*.

In relation to Paul's apostolic preaching in the West, there is his own testimony that both financial assistance and preaching the gospel were integrally related from the initial stages of his evangelisation (Phil 4,15). There is no reason to deny the same evangelistic style in his apostolic commitment elsewhere before this time, with the Acts of the Apostles, an extra Pauline source, credibly supporting this theory. Luke reported that, whilst preaching in Asia, Paul was not only careful to live the gospel of grace that he received through divine revelation, spending himself for it, but that he was always keen to meet the needs of others, "remembering the words of the Lord: it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20,35, Acts 20,18-35). Paul must have voluntarily cultivated this missionary method not only 'from

the first day of his setting foot in Asia' (Acts 20,18), but also from the initial stage of his apostolic life (1 Cor 9,1-27).

In brief, all the expressions referring to the collection in the undisputed Pauline letters make it undoubtedly clear that the collection for the poor was not optional, but integral to *apostolic preaching* both in West and East. It was in fact a perfect translation and concrete living of the gospel of Jesus. Even after *circa* 2000 years, Pauline exemplar remains not only as a perfect paradigm for preaching gospel but even serves as an effective panacea for the problems of the poorest of the world wringed in the global recession and unjust distribution of wealth. A meaningful jubilee celebration of "the Apostle" is 'remembering the poor' in *facta non verba*.

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# Theology for the Poor

## Joseph Patmury

Today the Churches are in the midst of a crisis of credibility because they are mostly rich Churches working for the poor, while a credible Church is a poor Church working with the poor. In this article Joseph Patmury calls the Churches to recapture their commitment to the poor and eliminate imposed poverty as it dehumanizes millions of people today. The story of Yahweh of the Old Testament and that of Jesus of the New Testament is the story of God's particular care and love for the poor. Wealth when accumulated becomes evil and when it is shared it becomes salvific. The greatest threat today to world peace is not terrorism or religious fundamentalism, but poverty and starvation. Dr. Joseph Patmury and his wife Gloria live in an Ashram near Bangarapet along with a few families belonging to various religious faiths. They explore new ways of living together, combining spirituality, voluntary poverty and interreligious dialogue.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18).*

The Gospel presents for us the earliest Christian tradition, of the figure and message of Jesus as the hope of the poor<sup>1</sup>. The story of Jesus is preeminently the story of a God who became poor for the sake of the poor<sup>2</sup>. Jesus was born in poverty, lived in poverty, died the death of the poor and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

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- 1 Cf. Bosch, David *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1972, p.98.
- 2 Cf. Pieris, Aloysius, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988, p.94.

When the church of Christ fails the suffering poor, the credibility of the church is at stake. As Aloysius Pieris notes: the French revolution had its avowed enemy and the target of its attacks the inhuman political leadership and the insensitive religious hierarchy of the day. The protagonists of religion, namely the higher clergy, propertied and acting in collusion with ruling nobility pointed with one hand to the remote goal of eternal happiness in heaven while with the other hand pampered themselves with God's earthly blessings denied to the masses<sup>3</sup>.

Today the churches are in the midst of a crisis of credibility because they are mostly rich churches working for the poor, while a credible church is a poor church working with the poor. The greater part of the world's wealth today is concentrated in the so called Christian countries. The largest stock piles of weapons of mass destruction are also in the possession of the Christian West. Infringement of church's rules on Sunday observance, sin against sex and marriage tend to enter the Christian conscience as profoundly sinful. But to live like Dives with Lazarus at the gate is not even perceived as sin. African polygamy is denounced as incompatible with Christian ethics, but the churches seem to have no problem with atomic weaponry. If Lazarus remained hungry to his death, it was because of a rich man's wastefulness, his refusal to share even the crumbs falling from the table. Wealth is evil when accumulated.

### **Poverty across the World**

In India, recently Danny Boyle's movie "Slumdog Millionaire" created a deep divide among India's middle and upper class urbanites. A number of prominent Indians have felt that the cinematic depiction of India's poverty is like washing dirty linen in public, making known a terrible family secret. More recently Amitabh Bachchan in a blog voiced similar sentiment regarding Slumdog Millionaire. Bachchan seems to find the portrayal of India's poverty gross and distasteful, rather like cracking racist jokes or breaking wind at the dining table. Poverty does exist, but must we have the bad taste to discuss or exhibit them? Of course if he can afford to donate Rs 50 lakh to a

temple when he visited it with his son and daughter-in-law to be, when he makes as much money if not more from commercial endorsements of the world's most expensive suiting materials than what he makes from movie roles, poverty must seem like a really insensitive joke or a particularly nasty discharge of gastric wind, says Jug Suraiya. He further remarks: poverty is not shameful. What is shameful is that more than 60 years after independence poverty continues to exist in our midst of India Shining, and India Winning, and India Rising, like a curable but chronically neglected disease. Poverty is not a joke in bad taste but a socially transmitted disease. People like Bachchan are angry about Slumdog Millionaire not because it shows the world how pitifully poor we are, but because inadvertently it has revealed how culpable we are in the continuance of poverty.<sup>4</sup>

According to the World Bank estimate a third of the global poor now reside in India. And seventy-seven percent of Indians - about 836 million people - live on less than half a dollar a day in one of the world's hottest economies<sup>5</sup>. Around 26 percent of India's population lives below the poverty line, with two hundred million of them in extreme poverty (must earn during the day to eat dinner). Economic liberalization since the early 1990s has created a 300 million-strong middle class and led to an average annual economic growth of 8.6 percent over the last few years, but millions of the country's poor remain untouched by the boom. This is the other world which can be characterized as the India of the Common People, constituting more than three-fourths of the population and consisting of all those whom the growth has, by and large, bypassed.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty of Indians must be studied with a slightly different perspective (than the poverty of other societies) due to the deep religious faiths of her people. Sadhus such as Nagas may be poor by

4 Cf. Jug Suraiya, "Slumdong Divide", *Times of India*, Bangalore, March 2(2009), p.14.

5 Reuters, "Nearly 80 pc of India lives on half dollar a day", New Delhi, August 10 (2007), <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSDEL218894>, retrieved on 04.03.2009.

6 Ibid

Western definitions, but for them, it is a chosen (and infinitely richer) way of life. Many of the beggars in India do so to follow family traditions. Some of them do it to fulfill vows made to a deity. The first step of becoming a Hindu monk (*brahmachari*) would be to beg (for the teacher and for self).

This is not to say all beggars do it by choice. The poverty in India takes many forms and degenerates to the utmost kind known to humankind. Just before the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Aerospace Exhibition in February 2009, Nava Thakuria a Guwahati based journalist asked: When one third of the world's poor lives in India, is it logical for New Delhi to go with the fascination of arms and aviation? India spends more and more money for the military empowerment, but ignores hopelessly the issue of health, where hundred thousands die due to curable diseases.<sup>7</sup> Binalakshmi Nepram, Secretary General of Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), added, "If we consider the current budget allocations in India for the year 2008-09, allocation for defence is Rs 105,600 crore which is 14.06% of total budget and around Rs 48,007 crore i.e. 45.5% of the defence budget is spent on arms and ammunitions." Similarly Dr Duarte Barreto of the Foundation of Educational Innovation in Asia (FEDINA), Bangalore remarks: while 900 million people of our country lacks social security protection, a demand for unilateral 10 percent reduction in military expenditure is not a big deal. When people are dying of poverty, can security and arms provide them with a basic square meal? Arvind Radhakrishnan of the Bangalore based School of Law (Christ University) had a major point to get highlighted, "In a country where poverty is rampant and where there is a great deal to be done in the fields of health and education, we cannot be spending so much on defence. Our battle is against starvation and deprivation, which cannot be fought with guns and missiles."<sup>8</sup>

7 Nava Thakuria, "Pride and Poverty: India's amazing blending" February 10, 2009, <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/90601>, retrieved on 03.03.2009

8 Quoted by Nava Thakuria, in *ibid.*

As America is the wealthiest and most bountiful nation in the world, it is no surprise that many think of hunger and poverty occurring only in developing countries not in America. It is ironic that as the world's wealthiest nation, hunger and poverty in the United States still persist. Evidence shows that millions of families and children live in poverty and experience hunger. Because of its persistence even in times of plenty, hunger and poverty can seem like an intractable problem. Yet hunger and poverty do not exist in the United States and around the world because there are not enough resources. The issue is one of priorities. As former Sen. Mark Hatfield once said, "We stand by as children starve by the millions because we lack the will to eliminate hunger. Yet we have found the will to develop missiles capable of flying over the polar cap and landing within a few hundred feet of their target. This is not innovation. It is a profound distortion of humanity's purpose on earth."<sup>9</sup>

First ever study of global household assets by the UN found that 50% of world's adults own just 1% of the global wealth. Near the bottom of the list were India, with per capita wealth of \$1,100, and Indonesia with assets per head of \$1,400.<sup>10</sup>

According to a study released by the United Nations, poverty is likely to remain the number one killer world wide<sup>11</sup>. Currently, there are about 1.2 billion people living below the poverty line of less than one dollar per day, and almost 3.0 billion on less than two dollars per day, compared with a global population of over 6.0 billion people, according to World Bank figures. Hence, as Leonardo Boff notes, today's most threatened creatures are not the whales or the giant

9 Hunger and Poverty in the United States. <http://www.results.org/website/article.asp?id=350>, Retrieved on 18.3.09

10 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2006/dec/06/business.internationalnews>, Retreaved on 24.3.09

11 Thalif Deen, "Poverty, the number one killer worldwide, warns UN" <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/killer.htm>, downloaded on 1.3.2009.6 Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds.), "Ecology and Poverty, *Concilium*, 5 (1995), P.ix.

pandas of China, but the poor of the world, condemned to die of hunger and disease before their time.<sup>12</sup>

About 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes, according to the United Nations. This is one person every three and a half seconds.<sup>13</sup> Yet there is plenty of food in the world for everyone. The problem is that hungry people are trapped in severe poverty. They lack the money to buy enough food to nourish themselves. Being constantly malnourished, they become weaker and often sick. This makes them increasingly less able to work, which then makes them even poorer and hungrier. This downward spiral often continues until death for them and their families.

“You all know about the severity and scale of the global food crisis,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told world leaders gathered in Rome for the opening of the High-level Conference on World Food Security.<sup>14</sup>

In an impassioned speech, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf appealed to world leaders for US\$30 billion a year to re-launch agriculture and avert future threats of conflicts over food.

In 2006, Dr. Diouf said, the world spent US\$1,200 billion on arms while food wasted in a single country could be valued at US\$100 billion. Excess consumption by the world’s obese amounts to US\$20 billion, he said.

“Against that backdrop, how can we explain to people of good sense and good faith that it was not possible to find US\$30 billion a year to enable 862 million hungry people to enjoy the most fundamental of human rights: the right to food and thus the right to life?” Dr. Diouf asked.<sup>15</sup>

12 Hunger and World Poverty Sources: United Nations World Food Program (WFP), Oxfam, UNICEF

13 Rome, Italy, June 3, 2008 (ENS), <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jun2008/2008-06-03-04.asp>, Retrieved on 07.03.09

14 “US\$30 Billion a Year Would Eradicate World Hunger”, <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jun2008/2008-06-03-04.asp>, Retrieved on 07.03.09\

15 Muhammad Yunus, Karl Weber (With), *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*, Public Affairs, 2007.

### Poverty is the ultimate denial of human rights

Muhammad Yunus in his latest book, *Creating a World Without Poverty*,<sup>16</sup> says:

*Poverty doesn't only condemn humans to lives of difficulty and unhappiness; it can expose them to life-threatening dangers. Because poverty denies people any semblance of control over their destiny, it is the ultimate denial of human rights. When freedom of speech or religion is violated in this country or that, global protests are often mobilized in response. Yet, when poverty violates the human rights of half the world's population, most of us turn our heads away and get on with our lives...*

*Poverty is perhaps the most serious threat to world peace, even more dangerous than terrorism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic hatred, political rivalries, or any of the other forces that often cited as promoting violence and war. Poverty leads to hopelessness, which provokes people to desperate acts. Those with practically nothing have no good reason to refrain from violence, since even acts with only a small chance of improving their conditions seem better than doing nothing and accepting their fate with passivity. Poverty also creates economic refugees, leading to clashes between populations. It leads to bitter conflicts between peoples, clans, and nations over scarce resources - water, arable land, energy supplies and any saleable commodity<sup>17</sup>.*

Yunus, an Economics professor originally became involved in the poverty issue not as a policy-maker, scholar, or researcher, but because poverty was all around him. He stopped teaching "elegant theories" and began lending small amounts of money, \$40 or less, without collateral, to the poorest women in the world. Thirty-three years later, the Grameen Bank, which he founded has helped seven million people

16 Ibid. p.105

17 Ibid., p.5.

live better lives building businesses to serve the poor. The bank is solidly profitable, with a 98.6% repayment rate. It inspired the micro-credit movement, which has helped 100 million of the poorest people in the world escape poverty and earned Yunus (Banker to the Poor) a Nobel Peace prize in 2006.

Grameen Bank has reversed conventional banking wisdom by focusing on women borrowers, dispensing of the requirement of collateral and extending loans only to the poorest borrowers. Today, more than 250 institutions in nearly 100 countries operate micro-credit programs based on the Grameen Bank model, while thousands of other micro-credit programs have emulated, adapted or been inspired by the Grameen Bank.

Yunus persistently deplores the double standard operative in the global economy where the rules favor the already rich and powerful but do not allow the poor to fully participate. What he wants is a fair chance and a level playing field for the poor, as opposed to the current state of "*financial imperialism*."<sup>18</sup>

Grameen focused on self-employment and recognized the informal economy as REAL economy as well as the household as an economically productive unit. In so doing, it revealed that entrepreneurship is not a rare quality but quasi-universal. The poorest peasants in Bangladesh can come up with their own business plan in creative fashions. Think of it, how creative do you have to be to survive on less than a dollar a day. Doesn't the very fact that people survive in extreme poverty testify to their resilience and intelligence?

Giving small credit to the very poor immediately puts their creative and survival skills to good use and breaks the cycle of economic exploitation that they have to resort to (such as money lenders) because there is no institutional support structure designed specifically for them. And charity is not the answer to this because it perpetuates relationships of dependency and dominance rather than creating self-reliance.

Yunus is convinced that poverty is created by economic, social, and political systems, and by false ideas—not by the laziness, ignorance, or moral failings of the poor.

He envisages a world without poverty and exploitation when he says:

*When I give public talks about my work, I usually end by sketching my vision of the world of the future. Imagine a world in which there are no more poor people... human beings, given the opportunity, were capable of governing themselves. When the time is right, a new idea is capable of transforming the world.<sup>19</sup>*

In the present world-wide economic crisis, governments spent billions of dollars to bail out big corporations, many of whom as President Obama himself has said are characterized by “recklessness and greed”. Why should people who ruin the world and other people’s lives be given bonuses? Instead of that if the money was spent on bailing out the people at the very bottom and small scale industries that are struggling for their existence, this would have spurred their creativity and business would have been well stimulated to have a “trickle up” effect as Yunus’ projects have demonstrated. Instead the already rich and powerful get rewarded for ruining the world, but do not allow the poor to participate in economic development.

Yet war can erupt as a result of the collapse of an impoverished society, one suffering the scourges of drought, hunger, lack of jobs, and lack of hope. Ending poverty is therefore a basic matter of our own security. Darfur, Somalia, Afghanistan; these are all, at their core, wars of extreme poverty. So too, quite obviously, were the recent wars of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, and many others.<sup>20</sup>

19 Jeffrey Sachs, “Economic Solidarity for a Crowded Planet” <http://www.butterpaper.com/vanilla/comments.php?DiscussionID=966&page=1>, Retrieved on 25.3.09

20 Eduardo Galeano,; “Notes on inequality and incommunication,” *Media Development*, no.1( 1996),p. 23.

## Absurdity of our economic situation

Poverty can deserve our compassion, but it does not provoke our indignation. In a system of rewards and punishments, that sees life as a merciless race between a few winners and a great many losers, defeat is the only sin that has no redemption.<sup>21</sup> In the globalized economy of our present dispensation, the poor are just disposable entities.

The sinful absurdity of the economic situation in our times is evidenced by the fact that the enormous and unprecedented technological and political power of our times is not ordained to alleviating the plight of the poor majority, but to the pauperisation and increase of existing imbalances between the poor and the rich. If the churches had spent as much energy in fighting this absurd economic system as it had fought communism, then the churches would have been better and the world would be different.

It is worth to take note of a remark made by a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka:

*In all revolutionary movements that brought some sort of liberation to the masses (the French Revolution, the October Revolution, etc), the church clearly failed to take a stand on behalf of the exploited masses but deservedly became targets of revolutionary attack.<sup>22</sup>*

Hence there is a deeply ingrained Asian conviction that colonialism, capitalism and Christianity form an inseparable trio.

## Poverty: Theological Reflection

Poverty in Scripture can be both social and spiritual. The words “poor” and “poverty” cover a wide range of meaning, overlapping with terms like “widow” or “orphan”, which underscores the expansive

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Aloysius Pieris, *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism*, Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1988 p. 95.

<sup>22</sup> Robert D. Spender, “Theology of Poor and Poverty,” in: *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Dictionaries/BakersEvangelicalDictionary/bed.cgi?number=T557>, Retrieved on 19.03.09

nature of the topic. In addition, because not all poor people are destitute, the meaning of these terms is heavily dependent upon context.

The highest concentration of terms for the poor in the Old Testament is found in the poetic books. The psalms dramatically portray the difficulties of physical poverty. Helping the poor is identified with righteousness (112:9) while oppression of the afflicted is one of the crimes of the wicked (109:16). The psalms also move beyond the sphere of social poverty to speak of spiritual humility (25:9). The poor are paralleled to the godly (12:1, 5), the upright (37:14), and those who love the Lord's salvation (40:17; 70:5) and are contrasted to evil men (140:1, 12), the wicked (37:14; 109:2, 22), and fools (14:1, 6; 74:21-22).<sup>23</sup>

Frequently in the psalms, especially lament psalms, the poor called to the Lord for help (34:6; 70:5; 86:1; 109:21-22) knowing that he heard their cry (69:33). The psalmist understood that God was the just judge of the poor. The Lord was seen as their refuge (14:6), deliverer (40:17), and provider (68:10). He rescued (35:10), raised (113:7), and satisfied them (132:15); it was the Lord who secured justice for the poor and the needy (140:12).

Certainly the most grievous examples of poverty and severest rebukes come from the prophets. Prophets clearly called attention to the misuse of riches and the abuse of the poor. Amos is quite graphic in his portrayal of the oppression of the poor. The poor are bought and sold, trampled, crushed, oppressed, forced, and denied justice by those who are in a position to do otherwise. Their treatment is a striking example of the waywardness of God's people from the covenant obligations and their unique relationship with the Lord. Amos underscores this situation: "They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed" (2:6-7).

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23 Cf. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknol, Orbis Books. 1991, p.100.

The emphasis of the prophetic invective fell upon the leaders. Instead of defending the poor and upholding the Law of God they took bribes and gifts to pervert justice (Isa 1:23). Neglecting the clear call of Scripture to provide for the poor, they passed unjust laws and deprived the poor of their rights (10:1-2; Jer 5:27-28), taking their goods and their land (Isa 3:13-15; 5:8). Isaiah accents their abuse: "What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" (3:15).

Most of the teaching about the poor in the New Testament occurs in the Gospels. Jesus understood the reality of poverty in society (Matt 26:9-11) and the difficulties of the poor (Mark 12:42-44). He stressed the need to give to the poor (Matt 19:21; Luke 12:33) and to provide for them (Luke 14:13,21). Jesus himself identified with poor people and, like many poor persons, did not have a home (Luke 9:58). He taught how difficult it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (Matt 19:23-24) and the necessity of spiritual poverty for a relationship with God (Matt 5:3).

The equality of persons before God is an important principle of the New Testament with the most powerful statement of the equality of the rich and poor coming from James, who emphasizes God's sensitivity to the poor and their faith (2:5). He notes that discriminating between the rich and the poor is both a sin against God (2:9) and an insult to the poor (2:6).

Christians usually make a distinction between two types of poverty: material poverty and poverty of the spirit. The former denotes the condition of the great many people of the world who are struggling to meet the basic needs of existence, namely, food, clothing, shelter and healthcare. Poverty of the spirit, on the other hand is the condition of people who are detached from excessive attachment to material things. It is sometimes argued that a Christian is not concerned so much with poverty as an economic reality but rather with the poverty of the spirit, a spirit that acknowledges one's basic helplessness and dependence on God. A person who is materially rich may possess the poverty of the spirit if he/she has true humility and real detachment.

Yet we cannot ignore the fact that the Gospels present Christ as talking about the poor and the rich in a sense that includes the material. Particularly in Luke we notice Jesus' special interest in the poor and other marginalized groups. The first words of Jesus in public (Lk. 4:18ff) contain a programmatic statement concerning his mission to reverse the destiny of the poor<sup>24</sup>.

It is doubtful that Jesus intended to launch a people's movement for political liberation with his Nazareth manifesto. However, Jesus announced and exerted himself for fundamental changes in society cannot be denied. In fact, his preaching and ministry was considered so dangerous to the religious and the political leaders of his day that they plotted together to eliminate him. Jesus was crucified as a rebel, because his conception of God and his proclamation of God's coming Kingdom brought him into conflict with those in power.

A unique feature of Judeo-Christianity is that it portrays Yahweh as the God of the slaves, the poor and the oppressed. And the unique feature of Christianity is that Jesus, its founder, is a God who became poor who enlightens us about the hidden roots of dehumanisation and impels us to create an alternative model of society.

Jesus chooses poverty as a means of redemption. Aloysius Pieris notes that a growing intimacy with the Father and a constant repudiation of mammon characterized the mission of Jesus on earth, emphasising the irreconcilable antagonism between God and wealth and the irrevocable covenant between God and the poor<sup>25</sup>.

The story of Jesus is pre-eminently a story of a God with the poor and a God for the poor. Hence the poor should occupy centrality in Christian theology. Soon after the Vatican II, the Latin American theologians attempted to do that. But they have yet to succeed. As Kenneth B. Wolf notes: over the course of Christian history the original promises of salvation to the poor would be buried in an avalanche of

24 Cf. Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1988, p.16.

25 Kenneth B. Wolf, "Christianity and the Idea of Poverty," <http://pages.pomona.edu/~kbw14747/povsyllabus.htm>, Retrieved on 10.3.09

treatises and commentaries designed to carve out a heavenly niche for the rich.<sup>26</sup>

Churches have busied themselves to minister to the poor, but have not dared to question the structures that create poverty. Reading the story of Jesus about the Good Samaritan, the sermon would end by exhorting the faithful that we must minister to those in need, which of course we must do. But if we question: who are these robbers? Why don't we find their hiding places and put them out of business, and then we would be denounced as reckless revolutionaries!

Christian spirituality cannot be devoid of secular action, as Pieris notes: We cannot worship Christ hanging on the cross inside a church, if we fail to notice him in the real unjust world, where he hangs crucified, calling us to join his struggle.<sup>27</sup> The liturgy at the alter should not overshadow the liturgy of life. We cannot be true Christians if we fail to imitate Christ. He was poor and hence we cannot but struggle to be poor. He fought against mammon and so we too must struggle for the poor. Spirituality involves secular action. Christian commitment to the ordering of human society and Christian opposition to injustices may be experienced as secular worship. The incarnate Christ continues his presence "sacramentally" in the flesh and blood of human beings, his least brethren.

What was shocking about the incarnation of Christ was that God, in becoming a human person chose the birth, the life and the death of the dehumanised ones. Hence what excludes us from communion with Christ is our self-righteousness that excludes the poor from our life. At the end time, the judgement of excommunication is not based on our dogma, but on what we have done to the poor.

In the story of the Good Samaritan Jesus defines my neighbour as the victim of injustice, i.e., the victim of robbery and violence.

We need to learn to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor, the exploited, and the non-people. Bible for the most part is the

26 Cf. Aloysius Pieris. *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, p.7.

27 Gloria Patmury, *Church in Asia Amidst the many Poor and the Many Religions: A Study of Aloysius Pieris' Writings*, Bangalore, Asian Trading Corporation, 2008, p. 39.

story of an oppressed people, who relies on God for their deliverance. The centuries that constitute the history of this people, from the Exodus to the beginning of Christianity, and even after, were on the whole periods of humiliations for the Hebrews. They were almost always subject to the rulers of developed nations around them: the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Ptolemies, Greeks and finally the Romans. What the bible documents for us is the religious experience that characterized a colonized and exploited people.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus gathering the poor and the marginalized as the first nucleus of God's kingdom: those who were socially excluded (lepers, deaf and dumb, maimed and blind), religiously ostracized (prostitutes and publicans), culturally subjugated (women and children), socially dependent (widows and orphans), psychologically tormented (demoniacs and epileptics), and spiritually humble (the God-fearing simple folk and repentant sinners). The poor by circumstances, the vicars of Christ and the poor by choice, the followers of Christ are the inheritors of God's reign. The central understanding of Christ's teaching is that life of the victims – the waste product of this world's wealth-accumulating plutocracy – the poor, the oppressed, the alienated, the orphans and widows have pride of place in the sharing of the gospel. Jesus struggled with the demons and evil forces in the first century society which deprived women, men and children of dignity and selfhood.

Hence the Latin American theologians' emphatic call to the church to give priority to the poor is both in keeping with the original concern of Jesus as well as in keeping with the desperate situation of today's world.

Although today we have the technology and the resources to provide for the basic needs of every human on earth, the fact is that the vast majority is literally struggling for their existence, while a small minority has accumulated the major portion of the world's resources for themselves. This is scandalous and unjustifiable and the churches cannot be mute spectators in such a situation<sup>28</sup>.

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28 Rudolf Hinz, "Sharing the Bread," *Lutheran World Federation*, June (1966), p. 8.

Wealth is evil when accumulated. It ceases to be evil when shared. Bread too when broken and shared, become the body of Christ. We know of Paul's sharp criticism against the Corinthians who thought that they could separate the Holy Communion from the daily communion of sharing.<sup>29</sup>

Sharing the gospel means inviting all disenfranchised people of the world to participate in God's reign of justice and peace. However peace and justice do not come easily. They have to be created. Mammon, interferes with God's kingdom not merely as a psychological drive, but as a gigantic sociological force trying to alienate us from God and from one another, by creating a sociological order that thrives on the coexistence of waste and want, exploitation and accumulation.

The present economic order is a challenge, nay an affront to some of the most fundamental values embedded in Christian religion. Forced poverty dehumanises the person, by depriving him or her of all dignity and reducing the person to the level of animals.

### **Conclusion**

Poverty poses several challenges to Christian theologians. First we recognize that there is a poverty that is the result of sin, the fruit of an unjust sharing of God's resources. We fail to see the connection between the poverty of the majority with the greed, over consumption and wastefulness of a minority. It is important to make people aware of this connection and work to eliminate such human made poverty. Since the poor are not theologians and the theologians are not generally poor, there is a need for a cultural reconciliation through a process of mutual evangelisation.

Christians, especially the more comfortable ones do not see structural injustice as sin and feel no obligation to do anything about it. It is part of the church's prophetic mission to confront the mammonic powers that thrive on waste, accumulation and the exploitation of

29 See Joseph Patmury, "Christian mission in the context of world poverty," in: Joseph Mattam and Joseph Valiamangalam (eds.), *Emerging Indian Missiology: Context and Concept*, Delhi, FOIM/ISPCK, 2006. pp.86-102.

others. This is a formidable task for the churches, precisely because it is the Christian countries that are the main cause of the problem.

Poverty is the touchstone of Christian spirituality. The church from its beginning was a sharing community and it has always been in great spiritual danger when it became rich and uncommitted to the poor. The churches in order to fulfil their mission must use all human means to anticipate the Kingdom of God on Earth. This involves also a social order in which oppressive structures are radically changed in order to allow every individual his/her own space to be fully human. This would involve not a mere passive solidarity with the poor, but a dynamic participation in their struggle for full humanity.

Acts 4:32-36 gives us the first Christian experience of creating an equitable human society, where no one claimed any of his possessions his own, but all shared everything they had, so that there was no needy person among them. This is the Christian ideal of the world and we must try the experiment over and over again till the world is truly transformed into God's Kingdom.

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